

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Nicholas Adams teaches architectural history at Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He is author, with Simon Pepper, of *Firearms and Fortifications: Military architecture and siege warfare in sixteenth-century Siena*, which was published earlier this year.

Penny Baumelha's *Thomas Hardy and Women: Sexual ideology and narrative form* was published in 1982.

Anita Brookner teaches at the Courtauld Institute of Art. Her *Jacques-Louis David*, 1980, has recently been reissued in paperback.

David Cannadine's *Lords and Landlords: The aristocracy and the towns 1774-1907* was published in 1980.

Roger Cardinal is the author of *Figures of Reality: A perspective on the poetic imagination*, 1981, and *Expressionism*, 1984.

John Clute's novel, *The Disinheriting Party*, was published in 1977.

Patricia Craig's biography of Elizabeth Bowen will appear in Penguin's Lives of Modern Women series later this year.

Winton Dean is the author of *Handel and the Opera Seria*, 1965, and *Georges Bizet*, 1970.

Dominick Graham's most recent books are *Fire-Power: British Army weapons and theories of war*, 1982, and *Tug of War: The battle for Italy 1943-1945*, which was published earlier this year.

Alastair Hamilton is Professor of the History of Ideas at the University of Leiden. His books include *The Family of Love*, 1981, and *William Bedwell the Arabist 1563-1632*, which was published last year.

Norman Hammond is Archaeology Correspondent of *The Times*.

James Hunter is the author of *The Making of the Crying Community*, 1976.

Mick Inglis's collection of poems, *The Zoologist's Bath and Other Adventures*, was published in 1982.

Gerard Irvine is a Prebendary of St Paul's Cathedral.

Jon Jack was until recently the India Correspondent of *The Sunday Times*.

Arthur Julius is the author of *Arthur Sullivan: A Victorian musician*, 1984, to be reissued in paperback later this year.

Christopher Johnson is Chief Economic Adviser to Lloyds Bank, and a Visiting Professor of Economics at the University of Surrey.

Douglas Johnson is Professor of French History at University College London. His books include *A Concise History of France*, 1970.

Eric Korn is an antiquarian bookseller in London.

A. Walton Litz teaches English at Princeton University. His books include *The Art of James Joyce*, 1961, and *Later America: A study of her artistic development*, 1965. He is at present editing the poetry of William Carlos Williams.

John Lloyd is Editor of the *New Statesman*. He is the author, with Martin Adeney, of *The Miners' Strike 1984-*

1985: *Loss without limit*, which will be reviewed shortly in the TLS.

John Lucas's *Modern English Poetry: From Hardy to Hughes* has been published recently.

Chaire Malin is on the staff of *Institutional Investor*.

P. J. Marshall is Professor of History at King's College London. He is the author, with Glyndwr Williams, of *The Great Map of Mankind: British perceptions of the world in the age of Enlightenment*, 1982, and *East Indian Funnies: The British in Bengal in the eighteenth century*, 1976.

Wilfrid Mellers's books include *Music in a New Found Land: Themes and developments in the history of American music*, 1964. His *Angels of the Night: Popular female singers of our time* will be reviewed in a forthcoming issue of the TLS.

J. N. Mohanty is Professor of Philosophy at the Temple University, Philadelphia. His most recent books are *Husserl and Frege*, 1982, and *The Possibility of Transcendental Philosophy*, 1985.

Alexander Murray is a Fellow of University College, Oxford. His *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages*, 1978, was reissued in paperback last year.

Blake Morrison is Deputy Literary Editor of the *Observer*. His collection of poems, *Dark Glasses*, was published in 1984.

David Nokes's *Jonathan Swift: A hypocrite reversed* was recently awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for the best biographical work published in 1985.

Anthony Phillips is Headmaster of The King's School, Canterbury. He has recently been appointed Canon Theologian of the Diocese of Truro. He is the author of *Ancient Israel's Criminal Law: A new approach to the Decalogue*, 1970.

Edo Pivcevic teaches philosophy at the University of Bristol. He is the author of *The Concept of Reality*, which was published earlier this year.

Peter Porter's most recent collection of poems is *Fast Forward*, 1984.

Harvey Sachs is author of *Taxanini*, 1978, and *Virtuoso*, 1982.

Jaet Stephen's stories appear in *First Fictions: Faber introduction 9*, which was published last month.

E. S. Turner's books include *Dear Old Blighy*, 1980, and *An ABC of Nostalgia*, 1984.

Stephen Wall is a Fellow of Keble College, Oxford.

Bernard Wasserstein is Professor of History at Brandeis University. His books include *The British in Palestine*, 1978, and *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939-1945*, 1979.

Katharine Worth is Professor of Drama and Theatre Studies at Royal Holloway College, Surrey. She is the author of *Chas. Wilde*, 1983, and *The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett*, 1978.

Anthony Giles is a lecturer in Contemporary History and Politics at Brunel University, not Harward, as stated in our issue of October 3.

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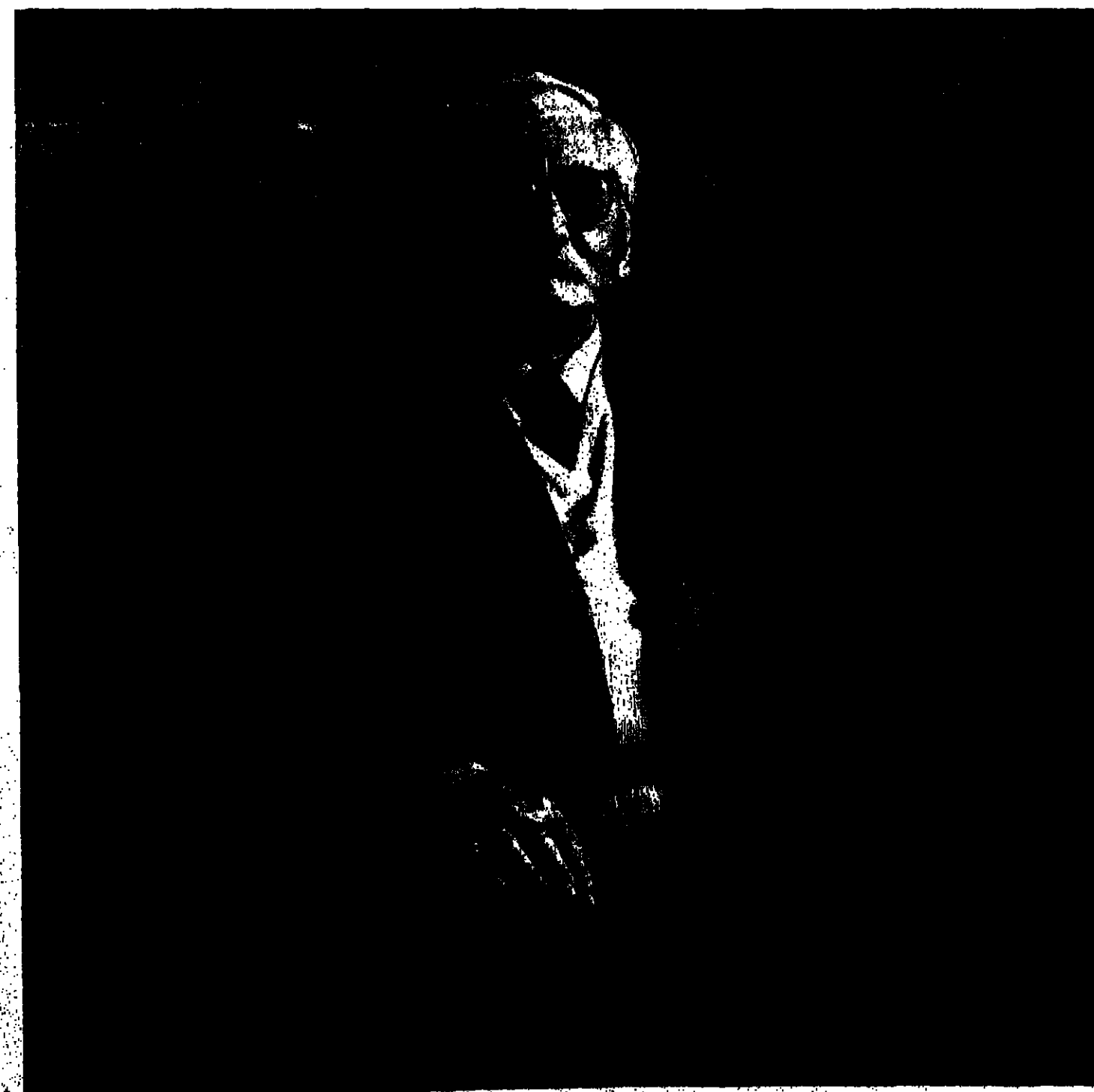
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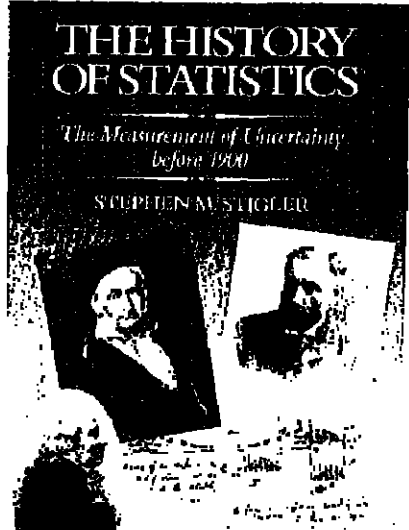
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## Irony of ironies

Hugh Kenner

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178pp. Oxford University Press. £12.95.  
0 19212253 3

Irony, that catless grin, does hover these days. Wayne C. Booth, author in 1975 of *A Rhetoric of Irony* which D. J. Enright's book is quick to acknowledge, has more recently (in the *Georgia Review*, Winter 1983), complained of an omnipresent mannerism, the use of "ironically" to say merely "What about that?" "It is ironic that the employment we find for our students interferes with their academic work." (It's not ironic, merely unintended.) "Ironically, this year's nominee has just been convicted of embezzlement." (Not ironically, no; embarrassingly.) "The tornado struck out of an ironically blue sky." (Ironically? Just oddly.) Here Booth adduces addle-pated Harriet Smith in *Emma*: "He was four-and-twenty the 8th of last June, and my birthday is the 23rd - just a fortnight and a day's difference! Which is very odd!" Nowadays, he remarks, she would say not "odd" but "ironic".

So "ironic" and "ironically" have become "all-purpose, flexible slot-fillers", and the moment they spring to mind you'd best reconsider. You were about to say, "Ironically, she never did achieve her goal?" Either cut the word entirely, counsels Booth, or decide whether you mean "sadly" or "tragically" or "appropriately", or perhaps simply "as all who knew her hoped". He even offers seventy-eight useful synonyms, thoughtfully grouped in four categories, and suggests that "but" or "yet" or "nevertheless" will frequently serve as well as any of them.

As to why "irony" has become so promiscuous, Booth sketches its present all-purpose definition: it pertains to "Every phenomenon in the universe that does not appear or behave exactly as I [the speaker] expected it to behave or wanted it to behave." Once, when we talked about the universe, we all meant an order with a ruling divinity whose designs transcended and often confounded ours: hence the Sophoclean irony, which bespoke Zeus, and Thomas Hardy's Little (and Big) Ironies, ascribed to a dicing President of the Immortals. Though less theocentric, people now still assume a universe making promises it can neglect to keep. It observes "laws", does it not, cosmological laws? But these laws seem to claim a random

right to exceptions. Hence the tornado from the blue sky, called "ironic".

A tic, then, attending the Disappearance of God? More than that, apparently. We have to account for the way "irony" now bedevils discourse about literature, where we've come to sense a minefield. Most books on irony, Enright remarks, are recent; he might have added that the topic once seemed so slight as to be encapsulable in a few phrases. Johnson's definition (1755) was simply "A mode of speech in which the meaning is contrary to the words". He offered two examples, one his own ("Bolingbroke was a holy man") and one Swift's: "So grave a body, upon so solemn an occasion, should not deal in irony, or explain their meaning by contraries." There "Irony" is no more complicated than "Poetess" ("A she poet") or "Poker" ("The iron bar with which men stir the fire").

For George Puttenham in 1589 "Ironia" (then still an unnaturalized word) was simply "the drye mocke": one example is the French king's retort to a man who claimed reward for facial cuts suffered in battle: "Ye may see what it is to runne away & looke backwards." It's a figure of aggression, drier than "Sarcasme, or the Bitter taunt", and Puttenham groups it with other figures that alter the sense of whole clauses: these include Allegoria ("the Figure of false semblant"), Asteismus ("the civill jest"), Micticismus ("the Fleering trump"), Charientismus ("the privy nippe") and Periphrasis, "as when we go about the bush, and will not in one or a few words expresse that thing which we desire to have known".

You can't miss Puttenham's implication that all such trifling with plain sense is dangerous; elsewhere he calls the figures "in a sort abuses or rather trespasses in speech, because they passe the ordinary limits of common utterance, and be occupied of purpose to deceive the eare and also the minde, drawing it from plainnesse and simplicitie to a certaine doublenesse", which is not right. So "The grave judges *Areopagites*" forbade figurative speech in courtrooms according to Puttenham, and I have read somewhere that an Act of Parliament to prohibit metaphor was proposed in seventeenth-century England. I've also heard a literary critic loudly denounced for expressing some admiration of ironic modes: (that was snobbish of him, seeing that irony amounts to deceiving plain folk who understand in a plain way. It was naive of the denouncer, too, who seemed to believe with Puttenham that plainness is the norm you achieve without guile.

Puttenham resolved his moral dilemma by exempting the poet, who after all pleads "pleasant and lovely causes and nothing perilous" to "princely dames, yong ladies, gentlewoman and courtiers". Though even the poet had best be careful and keep measure, still, by using Ironia and suchlike perversions sparingly, he can make "very vice goe for a formal vertue in the exercise of this Arte".

But from a local figure to be used with precaution, irony has now become a pervasive mode, inviting many bigish books (for example, Muecke, *The Compass of Irony*; Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony*; Japp, *Theorie der Ironie*) and now a smallish one like D. J. Enright's. Is Enright's yes-or-no-dear-yes tentativeness itself a pervasive irony? One may suspect so. That has been his way as an ironic poet. "Irony", he says, "had always struck me as alluring: a way of making statements, not unlike that of poetry, which through the unexpectedness and the avoidance of head-on assertion had a stronger chance of discomposing, if not winning over, the person addressed."

"The person addressed": that's like Puttenham assuming that we set out to "expresse that thing which we desire to have known". But - Deconstruction admonishes - there is at the core no "we", no "thing", no surviving "desire": just Text, the plaything of a reader or interpreter who'll posit authors and intentions at his peril. The writer but lays an egg for each reader to scramble. The hearer, the kitchen, those are disparate spheres. So when Wayne Booth in his book (not the essay I drew on earlier) canvasses the question, How do we know it's ironic?, he's unblushingly pre-Derrida. For the very question posits auctorial intention, and the up-to-date line has it that, intention being without meaning, there's always irony, in infinite regress.

An author, Booth said, may cue us by a title; "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" isn't going to be the Love Song of T. S. Eliot. But, but, we hasten to point out, isn't Prufrock a decent Eliot? (And it's true that his name appears only in the title. Homework: reread the poem, having changed its title to "October Thoughts".)

As for a plain style, we understand today (I don't say that ironically) how it's an extreme form of artifice. So by its mere presence it invites us to detect the invisible quotation-marks irony confers. If a style may best be described as a system of limits, hence characterized by what it cannot say, then any style connotes irony and so does "absence" of style.

A perennially fascinating instance is *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. For decades it was read as James Joyce's autobiography: how he lived, erred, fought and triumphed, to recreate life out of life. Forty years ago someone (myself: I imitate Enright's gesture of "sinking into my own anecdote") suggested that the *Portrait*'s Stephen Dedalus was not perhaps wholly Joyce: was an *uncompleted* Joyce, indeed radically uncompleteable, like Mr James Duffy in "A Painful Case" who'd done some Joycean things like translate Hauptmann but still was crippled in ways his creator had evaded. Stephen's one poem, I asserted, was jejune, his didactic manner a bluff.

Not to linger over the fortunes of that essay - someone instructively sneered that I took elaborate irony for truth - still it seems worth noting that by Wayne Booth's tests the *Portrait* discloses no marks of irony at all. Today adolescents read it as the naive book they'd like to have written. You can decide that "The Artist" in its title is ironic - not a portrait of Rembrandt by Rembrandt, but a look at the generic "artist" whom bright young folks may fancy themselves to be - but that is your decision. You may want to notice the book's very last lines, "Dublin 1904 / Trieste 1914", and reflect that a portrait painted during ten years is very different from Rembrandt's afternoon before a mirror, subject and portraitist co-present *now*. But aren't you being a trifle ingenious? That depends on how seriously you weigh every cue from the text, including those dates.

That book is the *fons et origo* of modern fiction, not least in its eschewal of ironic markers. We're immersed from the start in Stephen's idiom of the moment: "When you wet the bed first it is warm then it gets cold" (plain sequence); "Her bosom was as a bird's soft and slight, slight and soft as the breast of some dark-plumaged dove" (his chiasmic period); "John Alphonsus Mullen had just returned from the west of Ireland. (European and Asiatic papers please copy)" (his ironic period, at an unstable moment of which we leave him). For it's noteworthy that Joyce brings Stephen all the way from "Once upon a time" to gestures of overt irony, and mixes those with effusions like "Welcome O, life!", and simply leaves us to observe what's going on. (If we stay content to empathize with Stephen, Joyce can shrug.) Now when Dickens wrote of Oliver asking for more he didn't assume readers sensitive to an enormity. He poured a rich mix of Ironia and Sarcasme and

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Ateismus and Chorientismus and even Periphrasis, the better to denote that official-dom's sky was cracking:

"Mr Limbkins, I beg your pardon, Sir! Oliver Twist has asked for more!"

There was a general start. Horror was depicted on every countenance.

"For more!" said Mr Limbkins. "Compose yourself, Bumble, and answer me more distinctly. Do I understand that he has asked for more, after he had eaten the supper allotted by the dietary?"

"He did, Sir," replied Bumble.

"That boy will be hung," said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. "I know that boy will be hung."

There's no mistaking the ironic intent of that. But Joyce thought it heavy-handed. He assumed readers who could pick up unprovided not only the enormity of the hellfire sermon but also things like a disparity between Stephen's theorizings and his solipsism. In the *Stephen Hero* draft he had used response, sprinkling ironies like "this heaven-scending essayist" on the paraphrase of Stephen's paper "Drama and Life", but in ten years' labour on the *Portrait* he achieved a detachment which disdains such aids.

So different readers are apt to read different *Portraits*, and is that fact a high irony or not? Is the work weaker or stronger in not declaring intentions? No one doubts the intention of Dickens. But we can deconstruct Dickens. In a getting-and-spending world he didn't radically question, did he know what his intentions signified?

Safer, an ironist might say, to leave intentions for readers to invent. As did Swift, or did he? For *A Modest Proposal* cannot be evaded. It is perhaps the sole example of English prose we can say no one-time reader has ever forgotten. And it works by soliciting a reader (you, me) who assents to its opening statements, what a deal of beggars, what a nuisance they are, trusting the full of a reasonable voice, till in those same reasonable tones a sentence about cooking babies (you know the one) prompts a violent disjunction: this is monstrous! After that the modest proposer keeps on talking, confident that he is in sane company, from which however we have absented ourselves. And what keeps us reading, as horror climbs atop horror? Is it not partly that calm solicitation of *someone* who assents to every word? There's an awful fascination in postulating such a someone. But we assented too, till the cooking came up. Is this what generations of usage have made of reason, of expressing in a few words "that thing which we desire to have known"? Is reason, is our trust in orderly prose, somehow entangled in our willingness to dismiss misery as a simple nuisance? That was one thing we assented to, as the pamphlet got started.

But don't we as readers normally comply with authors, and by assenting help them get things started? Is not that the way we assure ourselves of something to read? For if our habit is to quarrel with opening words we'll face empty evenings, alone with our own bad temper. So Swift (1729) deconstructed our very appetite for the printed page, for the reasonable voice. The force of irony has not further gone. Where were you, Derrida, in 1729?

Mr Enright – but look, ironically, I've been scamping his book all this while. All right. It's a short book, a low-keyed book, a book without pretensions to system: an "essay", he calls it, in twenty-eight short parts with headings like "Definitions?" and "Chinese". It meditates, with unspurred economy on all manner of examples, many of them transient. "It was announced in May 1985 that crocodile meat for human consumption was about to be available in Australian grocery stores since the reptile was no longer an endangered species." Thus crocodiles might long to remain an endangered species, hence out of butcher's danger, though Enright (ironically?) calls their longing "not altogether logical".

Or a British Rail poster which lists cheques and credit cards can end, "Cash is, of course, acceptable". Irony or not? No, but "perhaps indicative of a faint sense that there are still old-world peasants who carry cash on them". Just so. And here's a report (TLS, September 21, 1984) that a New York State school board banned *A Modest Proposal* as being "in bad taste". Taste! Mr Enright's palate for examples cannot be faulted. And his cherishes non-literary examples; devoid of ironic intention, they invite an ironic reading.

What he tends to do with an example is find something quietly ironic to say about it; I found the whole book running together like wallpaper, quiet (yes, I know I've said that), short-breathed (just two-and-a-half pages on Pope), self-deprecating in an ironical way:

As for writing about irony, that too is risky since like enough you will emerge as either a smart alec or a dim-wit. Nevertheless, if you are an academic, publishing on even so equivocal a theme may help you to gain promotion. As we know, all teachers are good teachers, but in any structure involving seniority some need to be picked out as more good than others.

Enright doesn't conceal his erstwhile academic connections. But we needn't think them operative now. Thus at whose expense is this irony? Or is it irony? Would Wayne Booth pass it as ironic? Would D. J. Enright?

Some of the effects so produced can be labyrinthine. Sarcastic, Christopher Ricks is quoted as saying, is "inferior in its superiority"; irony means not knowing better but knowing otherwise. (Thus *someone* can be imagined who'd credit the Modest Proposer, but for sarcasm two ways don't exist.) Ricks, it next turns out, was discussing a poem which Enright quotes in full "since it seems not to be in print". It's about the interchangeability, misery for misery under bombing, of Hanoi and Saigon. The gist of Ricks's analysis is quoted too.

Enright then addresses the poem himself. He finds "a heaviness about it, a labour-intensiveness manifested in its repetitions, and a trace of preachiness. . . . The author's efforts

## Anglo-Irish connections

Patricia Craig

HERMIONE LEE (Editor)  
The Mulberry Tree: Writings of Elizabeth Bowen  
325pp. Virago. £12.95.  
0 85068 527 6

A mulberry tree was a feature of the grounds at Downe House in Kent, the girls' school to which Elizabeth Bowen went as a pupil in the first autumn of the First World War; the school, she says, "must have re-assembled with an elating sense of emergency", but this sense was lost on her as everything at that moment seemed strange. She was fifteen, and this was her third school; she had lived in Dublin, Cork and Kent; her mother had died, and her present home was in Hertfordshire, with an aunt. Downe House was the most significant of her schools: here, she was taught how not to write – "though I still do not always write as I should", she adds in parenthesis – and also how not to behave: an amiable imperturbability was the thing.

Elizabeth Bowen's essay about her school-days (entitled "The Mulberry Tree", and first published in *The Old School*, edited by Graham Greene) has more than a touch of Downe House dryness: "Foilish, mannerisms we . . . exaggerated most diligently. . . . Personality came out in patches, like damp through a wall." The blithe, urbane tone is characteristic, as is the sardonic amusement with which she records the doings of schoolgirls, whether remembered or imagined; in her novels and stories we find quite a few adolescents (like Theodora Thirlman in *Friends and Relations*) full of pertness or misplaced aplomb. "The Mulberry Tree" makes a good starting-point for this assembly of certain non-fiction pieces written by Elizabeth Bowen over a period of forty-odd years, since it deals with a facet of the "inner landscape" with which her literary impulse was bound up. Bowen, terrain – her term – consists of Co Cork and London, as well as parts of Kent; but what's essential to it, over and above the actual localities it contains, is the intangible ingredient – atmosphere – which the writer's imagination supplies. It is a reciprocal process; these are the places that affected the writer, and she in turn affects them, or at least our view of them.

"If you begin in Ireland, Ireland remains the norm: like it or not", Elizabeth Bowen wrote. What it means to be Anglo-Irish is a recurring consideration: in her work. In 1942, for example, she contributed to Sean O'Faoláin's

to keep cool . . . evidence themselves in a stolid, too deliberate hypothermia." (Fine word, that; I've not seen it in lit'ry discussion before.) Since "the author did not see fit to include the piece in his collected poems", we're to suppose that he felt misgivings such as those detailed.

The author? The notes don't name him. They simply send us to *New York Review of Books*, August 13, 1970, where, verifying a suspicion, we may ascertain that the poem "Streets" was written by – D. J. Enright. *Quelle chose là qui ne va pas*. Or else irony.

The trope expands like a gas: it's not only "the meaning contrary to the words" but saying (as above) less than is meant; also saying more than is meant; even (ironically) saying just what it is meant and not being trusted. Who now, it's tempting to say, trusts anything said? There seem reasons not wholly to trust Enright. Enright too doesn't wholly trust Wayne Booth, who can crush his subject "under the weight of brilliance", or mislay it "under sudden decelerations and profusions". Booth is American. Have we here the English aversion to what gets called "cleverness"? Have we, in *The Alluring Problem* (coy title), a deliberately English book, pragmatic, unsystematic, chewing its cud while it chances on instances? Is that too ironic a reading?

Yes, it is; because our author seems without guile, if not without reticence. What troubles him about books like Booth's and Muecke's is some disparity between the system implied by any book and the very elusiveness their subject has acquired. Hence, since the subject compels

periodical *The Bell* an animated, rather defensive article on "The Big House" (reprinted here), in which she claims credit for her compatriots for their nonchalance, stylishness, refusal to be downcast and commitment to sociability. Also included in *The Mulberry Tree* is "Eire", the piece on Irish neutrality which appeared in the *New Statesman* in 1941 – explaining it, not condoning it. No one was better placed to comment on this matter than Elizabeth Bowen, whose "war work" included the drafting of a series of reports, for the Ministry of Information, on the mood in Ireland with regard to the war. "The childishness and obtuseness of this country [Ireland] cannot fail to be irritating to the English mind", she wrote sternly in one of these undercover reports; however, she goes on to defend the Irish against certain of the charges levelled against them. Disloyalty, for example: "given the plain facts of history", she says, the word simply isn't applicable. "I could wish that the English kept history in mind more, that the Irish kept it in mind less."

A travel permit enabled Elizabeth Bowen to move freely between Ireland and England (she and her husband Alan Cameron had lived at 2 Clarence Terrace, Regent's Park, since 1935). In September 1940 – "the heady autumn of the first . . . air raids" – she was back in London, and out of from her home by an unexpended bomb: "London 1940" (another of Hermione Lee's choices) recounts the experience. The mousy dust shed by mutilated buildings, leaves swept up with the glass in them: these, noted in the essay, are details familiar to readers of the *Demon Lover* stories and *The Heat of the Day* (both among the handful of contemporary works of fiction that put their finger on some quintessential mood or flavour of the time). In the story, "Mysterious Kor", in which a moonlit, unearthly city is superimposed over blacked-out London, a debt of the author's is acknowledged: to Rider Haggard's *She*, a work she had latched on to at the suitable age of twelve. A talk broadcast in 1947 considers the effect on her imagination – or on any vivid imagination – of this potent story.

Hermione Lee has arranged her material under six headings: Essays, Prefaces, Reviews, Letters, Broadcasts and Autobiography; and writes a cogent and informed introduction to go with each. Too often, collections are to be dreaded. Elizabeth Bowen once observed (in *an enthusiastic review of E. M. Forster's Abinger Harvest*, not in *The Mulberry Tree*), and went on to enumerate the defects such offerings may throw into relief: tricks of mind, prejudices and so forth. "Cumulatively, the effect

him, a kind of unbook, rich and modest and asserted by a simple pun, the one inherent in the keyword "Problem", which means both something you might solve and something that, in calling it a Problem, you concede is insoluble: is only for rotating, pondering. No longer, as for Pattenham and Johnson, an isolate device, "irony" seems to have become the very condition of discourse. The Alluring Problem, indeed; the moment we're aware that it's discourse we attend to, we're aware of what theorists call its problematic. And it's to give that awareness a name that we've stretched the term "irony", to Booth's recent distress. Greek *ekronela* meant stunted ignorance; an *ekron* was a dissembler. If you dissembled or simulated you knew it. But those were simpler times. It's now routinely assumed that no one (save perhaps a crook) really knows what is conveyed by anything he's saying.

Language is just behaviour; or it's just contrivance; or just self-deception, or just so many graphemes set down for pay. So we say. Yet its richness was the nineteenth century's great discovery, and inventorying those riches the obsession of the century's most active minds. That human beings handled, every day, such unimaginable treasures! A Skeat, a Murray, a Furnivall: they were men dazzled by linguistic vistas, drunk on linguistic lore. So, later, we have Saussure and Bakhtin. So it may be again. What we live through today, having learned to drink so deep, is the hangover we mislaid irony.

may be desolating." No such recurrence deaden *The Mulberry Tree*. Connections, the pursuit or elaboration of certain basic ideas or the reiteration of points: when these are picked up it is to enriching, not diminishing, effect. Her views on dialogue in the novel, for example – these, expounded fully in the well-known "Notes on Writing a Novel" (which we find here), were tried out on various friends, one of whom, the Canadian diplomat Charles Ritchie, recorded them in his diary published under the title of *The Siren Years*.

Ritchie is virtually absent from *The Mulberry Tree*, and this is odd since less important figures in Elizabeth Bowen's life are carefully docketed in a series of notes appended to the text. It might have been worth including a letter in which he is mentioned in order to get a biographical note which would have added something to the picture of Elizabeth Bowen (after all, the book is described in the blurb as "a kind of autobiography"). There is, for instance, a letter to William Plomer, written in February 1946, in which she regrets Charles Ritchie's recall to Ottawa, on account of what she calls "this miserable spy-ring affair" (the one involving Nunn May). Other letters unfortunately excluded are the one to William Plomer describing a hunt ball at her ancestral home, Bowen's Court in Co Cork, with electric light rigged up for the occasion and the place very strikingly illuminated, "which I had never seen before" – all "extremely gorgeous and unanime, as the band and tramping made talk impossible"; and one to Virginia Woolf, concerning a visit to Rome and an Italian waiter who – when Elizabeth Bowen failed to understand an item in the menu – "flapped his elbows like wings, made cooing noises then split himself down the breastbone with his thumbnail to show it was half a pigeon".

A phrase or two, in the Letters section, has been incorrectly transcribed: Elizabeth Bowen was full of irritations and repugnances when she came over to Bowen's Court just after the war (as she told William Plomer) – not "visitations", whatever those are supposed to be. Writing to the same correspondent in 1938 about the enjoyable life they all had, "seeing each other without being a group", she adds: "Perhaps ours was, is, the only non-grouping generation". This appears as "non-groupy generation", which creates a wrong idea about Elizabeth Bowen's use of English. However, the cumulative effect of *The Mulberry Tree* pieces is to make us feel that Elizabeth Bowen's non-fiction writing means all the requirements set out by herself: "readers' truth; evocation, some touch of grace"

## Creative campaigner

Eric Korn

DAVID C. SMITH  
H. G. Wells: Desperately mortal  
634pp. Yale. £18.50.  
0300036728

You might make an entertaining Edwardian Personality Quiz by taking a suitable text and deleting the proper names, thus:

We found, in a copy of — we had brought with us, a letter from Mrs —, denouncing the moral tone of the younger generation, a propos of a rising young writer and having read it aloud we decided to do something about it. So we stripped ourselves under the trees as though there was no one in the world but ourselves, and we made love all over Mrs —.

The newspaper was *The Times*, the moralist was Mrs Humphry Ward, the speaker – of course – H. G. Wells, in the posthumous, or rather the post-dated portion of his autobiographical experiment, his fellow stripper was "Little e", Elizabeth, Gräfin von Arnim, later Countess Russell, and the "rising young writer", whom Wells at that moment had not encountered in the flesh, was Rebecca West.

I quote this passage in no prurient spirit, but merely to show how H. G. Wells may literally be said to have done his love-making on paper. And likewise his kissing and his telling, his exulting and his ruling, his debating and his quarrelling, his planning and his dreaming, his openly conspiring and his secret places. And since he was active, if not hyper-active, socially and sometimes anti-socially, creatively and procreatively, for the better part of eighty years, the biographer's problem is not a shortage of material. The printed sources alone are vast: an average of three books or pamphlets a year for fifty years, endless journalism; four decades as an oracle, and how many interviews a week in those decades? And though Marjorie Wells, H.G.'s daughter-in-law and last amanuensis, sent vast bundles of correspondence back to the correspondents, letters are

## A hierophant and his hearers

Peter Reading

JOHN CAREY (Editor)  
William Golding: The man and his books:  
A tribute on his 75th birthday  
191pp. Faber. £12.50.  
0571139019  
NORMAN PAGE (Editor)  
William Golding: Novels, 1954-67  
190pp. Macmillan. £20 (paperback, £6.95).  
0333376609

John Carey has organized his material for a seventy-fifth-birthday tribute to William Golding into three sections: there are five personal reminiscences, five critical essays, and five miscellaneous pieces from "Golding's fellow authors". *William Golding: The man and his books* concludes with an interview given by the novelist to Professor Carey last year. The most interesting parts are the memoirs and the interview.

Peter Moss contributes a brilliant portrait of Golding's father, Alec Albert, by whom he was taught science at Marlborough in the 1930s. Golding *père* seems to have been a marvellous man, an atheist of Quaker extraction, something of a polymath (as well as being knowledgeable in chemistry, physics and biology, he also played the flute, violin and piano) and a remarkable teacher. He personally, by hand, manufactured all the science textbooks required by the school, in addition to some impressive-sounding apparatus:

There was, I remember, the treadle sewing machine which had been converted into a bizarre dynamo, with a giant horseshoe magnet some two feet long and a pair of whirling, handwood coils the size of small jam jars. When pedalled furiously, the whole equipment vibrated violently, the flash lamp bulb lit up feebly, but nowhere else have I seen the whole process of the generation of electricity reduced to such basic and easily comprehended elements.

(In his interview with Carey, Golding discloses that the kindly, atheist, Wellsian rationalist science-master, Nick, in *Free Fall*, is based on truth; evocation, some touch of grace

remorselessly coacervating in the great Wells-hoard at Illinois and lesser ones like Bromley.

Daunting quantities of data, and now comes David C. Smith, dauntless Professor of History from the woods of Maine, with Wellsian energy and Wellsian enthusiasm for the man and his causes, who seems to have read the lot. No previous biographer has shown anything like Professor Smith's familiarity with the sources or his skill in marshalling them; no previous biographer, it follows, has rendered the density, the sheer brimming joyful busyness of the life. Smith is the chronicler of Wells's endless campaigns, magnificent or petty: the Fabian campaign, the League of Nations campaign, the campaign for a Declaration of Human Rights, the campaign against dogs in Hanover Terrace (Smith cannot believe that the draft letter was ever sent, but I have seen a reply), the campaigns for education, the campaign to get rid of Odette Keun. For its massive documentation and its imaginative empathy, this will serve as the definitive biography for years to come.

The pace is sometimes breathless. Half-a-dozen pages cover the period of the first volume of *Experiment in Autobiography* (which, not unfairly, Smith assumes his public will have read). Documentation is segregated into a hundred-odd pages of end-notes, sometimes in the style of Mr Jingle. Note six to Chapter One discusses Wells's attitude to his childhood poverty, his opinion of Henry James, the present ownership of the High Street Shop in Bromley, his father's debts, drink problem, and final residence. But Wells's life was breathless, and this may be the right way to depict it. It seems at first glance neatly to disassemble into a series of quite disparate instants, such as a contemporary Jacques might enumerate: first the sickly (doubtless mewling) infant, then the sluggish apprentice (willingly to school, unwillingly to the drapers'), the teacher of zoology, the science-fiction pioneer (how briefly!), the political soldier, full of strange, Fabian oaths, the romantic

ably based on this extraordinary Alec Albert.)

A funny anecdote is related by Peter Green, who was host to the Goldings at his home in Greece. Having all day eschewed Greek booze in the pursuit of sobriety, the friends arrive at a hilltop *kapheneion* where tea is temperately ordered. Golding confers in private, with the waiter, who produces two teapots, one of which is exclusively for the *aphendis*, the boss. Green notices that no steam emanates from Golding's pot, which, it transpires, contains retsina and is emptied with solitary gusto.

Other noteworthy memories are contributed by Anthony Barrett, who was taught by Golding at Bishop Wordsworth's School, Salisbury, in 1945, and by Charles Monteith, whose thrilling account of the submission to Faber of the *Strangers from Within* (*Lord of the Flies*) typescript was published in the TLS of September 19.

But it is the interviewee, unobtrusively prompted by Carey, who provides the choicest insights. There's an intriguing illumination of influence and narrative technique when Golding explains how, in *The Inheritors*, he uses a Homeric extended simile to distance the reader, prolong a tension and accentuate a terror by contrasting digression. Elsewhere, Carey's perception that the combination of child and fire recurs in the novels (he cites Matty, child with a mark on his face, coming out of the fire in *Darkness Visible*, and the child with a mark on its face in *Lord of the Flies* disappearing into the forest fire) is answered: "Do you know . . . this is the first time that has occurred to me." This is particularly amusing since, earlier in the Festschrift, Craig Raine has plausibly invoked Southwell's poem "The Burning Babe" apropos of Matty's phoenix-like appearance in *Darkness Visible*.

Another of Raine's source suggestions (this time for *Pincher Martin*), Raskolnikov's meditation, in *Crime and Punishment*, on the desirability of even putrefaction life, echoes an identical thought by Norman Page – editor of the set of essays by divers hands *William Golding: Novels, 1954-67* in the Macmillan Casebook series. This book – the sort that hapless



novelist, the Deist, the League of Nations crusader, the political journalist (a bit caponlined), again the teacher, the judge, the prophet . . . already more than seven and we haven't had to mention the lover.

Smith disabuses us of this false notion: his thematic treatment shows how each of Wells's passing passions (except perhaps the brief theological one) remained with him, a motif, a preoccupation, an opportunity, a network of friends and influences, an embarrassment, another string to that diversely strung bow.

Smith shows an engaging readiness to refigure Wells's battles, powered by the belief, which seems to me entirely rational, that nothing in the past forty years has invalidated his premiss that only a World State can prevent world chaos. It doesn't follow from this that one need side with Wells against Shaw in the debate on the future of the Fabian Society. On the great James-Wells Heavyweight Prize Fight, Smith resents the narrow Eng-Lit view that Wells was a philistine who abused literature for worldly

ends, behaved like a guttersnipe to the Great Artist, received a salutary drubbing at his hands and was never heard of again. The Great Tradition, like a river chastened by James's Mosaic knock, flowed away from didacticism for ever, leaving Wells isolated in an arid upland. Smith does not see it this way; nor, by and large, did Wells's contemporaries. And it is this huge cast of contemporaries that Smith has explored so effectively, setting Wells more intricately into his social context than before.

Just one aspect of this is the entertaining appendix in which Smith lists the recipients of presentation copies for one of H.G.'s late novels, *The Autocracy of Mr Parham*. It has long been understood in book-collecting circles that Wells inscriptions are not exactly black tulips, and now we know. Fifty copies went to Aldous and Odette, to Harold Laski and "Little e", to G.B.S. and Elizabeth Arden. Smith doesn't identify Mrs Arden further, but this gossip theatre-person, in her memoirs, *My Sentimental Self* (1922), describes her first meeting with Wells. She said "Tell me of your next book"; he replied "I'd as soon take off my clothes." It isn't clear if he ever did. Mrs Arden is kitchiness about their relationship, quoting his "compromising" notes to her: "Beloved, I am working and working like Gnd, but I shall see you soon." As it happens, I have that letter, and it addresses her not as "beloved" but "Dear E.A.". I bought it under the impression it was addressed to E. Arnold Bennett. A salutary tale, revealing how much uncertainty remains in the best documented life.

So it is no shame to Professor Smith and his important achievement if, among the thousands of new facts he has unearthed, there should be a couple of factoids. The average royalty in 1925, on his own figures, is 3½d not 3/5d. The animal Wells studied in the South Kensington laboratory was *Asiacus* (Huxley wrote a book on it) not *Asteres*. St George Grant should be St George Mivart; and by Wells's own testimony, the lady in, rather on the newspaper, was not Amber Reeves.

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## DENT

# Welcome traveller

### John Ure

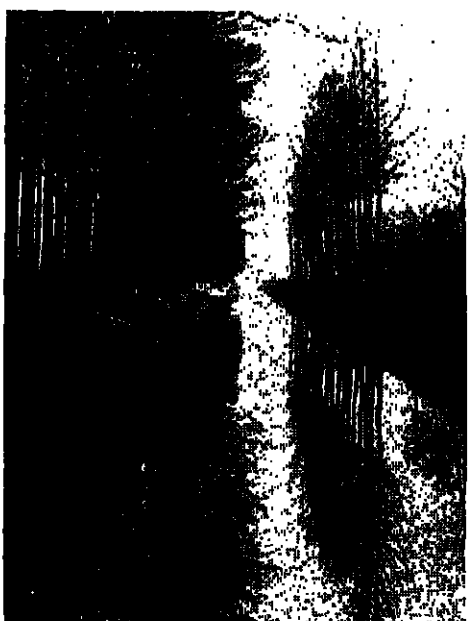
PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR  
The Hook of Holland: On foot to Constantinople from The Hook of Holland: The Middle Danube to the Iron Gates 242pp. John Murray. £13.95. 07195 42642

Patrick Leigh Fermor lost the notebooks in which he recorded his journey on foot in the mid-1930s from The Hook of Holland to Constantinople, and they did not come to light again until the 1970s. The result was the publication of *A Time of Gifts* (reviewed in TLS, October 7, 1977), describing the first leg of his youthful march as far as the bridge over the Danube between Slovakia and Hungary. As the nine years have crawled by while his admirers waited for the second instalment, they had begun to wonder whether the notebooks were lost again; happily they were not. We now have his account of the central passage of the journey, across the Hungarian plains, the marches of Transylvania and the Carpathian mountains - a land of "fiendish monocoloured horsemen, queens in lonely towers, toppling ranges, deep forests, plains full of half-wild horses... mad noblemen and rioting jacqueries". The long wait has been abundantly worth while.

Between the Woods and the Water evokes two separate sentiments. The first is the ecstasy of youthful adventures, of the open road, of fast-formed and fast-held friendships. The second is the thirst for knowledge of the romantic scholar: the intellectual curiosity that is aroused by every library and legend, by every cathedral and castle from the Rhine to the Bosphorus. Leigh Fermor revels in words for their own sake. In the cathedral of Esztergom, having noted the worshippers in "katpaks of bearskin" and their plumes of egrets' feathers, he observes: "Alleluiahs were on the wing, the

cumulus of incense billowing round the carved acanthus leaves was winding aloft and losing itself in the shadows of the dome." Humour too plays a part in the process. Reflecting on the influence of English nannies on the children of Central European aristocrats, he finds that "toes kept count of pigs going to market before fingers learnt to tell beads, and Three Blind Mice rushed in much earlier than inkblings of the Trinity". And who but Leigh Fermor would describe Count Dracula's propensity for impaling his victims as "a lifelong foible"?

He writes in the tradition of a certain sort of British traveller. The rhapsodies on architecture are reminiscent of Robert Byron; the quick eye for a classical connection reminds one of Norman Douglas; the surrender to the charms of gypsy music and Austro-Hungarian wenchery recalls the Central European exploits



A canal in Holland, a photograph by Brett Weston reproduced from *Landscape* (244pp. Thames and Hudson, £9.95. 0 500 27349 9).

of Robert Bruce Lockhart. And yet Leigh Fermor's compendium is peculiarly his own: you never know quite what the next few pages will have in store, but you can be reasonably confident that you will be carried along by the sheer momentum of the whole unstructured performance.

As he confesses in his introductory letter, Leigh Fermor was at the receiving end of a great deal of lavish - indeed princely - hospitality during this phase of his (intended) rugged journey. But nowhere - among all the hilarious vignettes of champagne picnics at baronial hunting lodges and all-night balls at Buda in borrowed finery - is there a hint of sponging. How did it come about that the travel-stained youth was so instantly acceptable in palaces as well as gypsy encampments? A number of factors must have helped: his curiosity in all he saw must have flattered his hosts; his enthusiasm must have been infectious (the reader is not immune); his linguistic capacity was a breaker of barriers; his ability to sketch his hostesses gave instant pleasure; his familiarity with rural pastimes must have helped; his dashing approach to a wild horse or a wilder mazarinka may have struck them as patriotic. But the real key to his success as a guest (and one which every itinerant undergraduate would do well to ponder) was surely that he never saw his benefactors as means to an end, as comfortable billets or convenient stepping-stones; he saw them as friends with whom he endeavoured to keep in touch for long (or long) years afterwards and whose quibbles and foibles enriched his memory and experience as much as their exotic food and soft beds eased his immediate path.

We now wait for the third volume of the travelogue: the account of the final leg of his journey from the Iron Gates to Constantinople itself. The trilogy will constitute not only a monument to a vanished Europe, but also as inspiration to every young man with a pack on his back and a taste for scholarship and adventure.

# The future since Chernobyl

### Mary Warnock

ANDY PORTER, MARTIN SPENCE and ROY THOMPSON  
The Energy Fix: Towards a socialist energy strategy 224pp. Pluto. Paperback. £5.95. 07453 00707

STAN OPENSHAW  
Nuclear Power: Siting and safety 352pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £20 (paperback, £9.95). 07102 01834  
DONALD B. BARTLETT and JAMES B. STEELE  
Forever More: Nuclear waste in America 352pp. Norton. £15.10. 0393 019209  
Assessment of Best Practical Environmental Options for Management of Low and Intermediate-level Solid Radioactive Waste 80pp. HMSO. £5.85. 01751 8573

These books were published before the Chernobyl disaster. Thus, when they first appeared, they might have seemed worth considering only to a minority (though already a rapidly growing one) of "Green" party members, Friends of the Earth, CND enthusiasts, or people living close to a nuclear power station or proposed disposal site. Chernobyl has changed all that. There can now hardly be anyone in Britain who has not raised the question of the country's dependence on nuclear power; there can hardly be anyone not anxious to acquire such hard information as there is about safety; or, to put it more gloomily, about risks.

The Energy Fix, however, is a wholly propagandist work. It is as much a demand that run-down coal mines should be reopened as an argument for closing nuclear power stations. These are condemned not only because they are unsafe, but because they "fragment the work-force", since conditions of such peculiar

hazard and secrecy necessarily divide worker against worker, and encourage a hierarchical structure of production. There may be truth in this. But the fact is that, in the face of nuclear accident, everyone is equal. There is no need to strive for equality in this context. Questions about the strategies we must adopt if we are to continue to rely on nuclear power, or, for that matter, if we are to abandon it, must be asked and answered as far as possible neutrally. This is the only way in which proposed solutions can be examined with the thoroughness and openness they deserve.

Stan Openshaw's *Nuclear Power: Siting and safety* comes much nearer to this ideal. It is a geographer's argument for siting nuclear power stations and reprocessing plants as far away as possible from centres of population. Of course, since Chernobyl, it may seem that in the case of accident we are so much at the mercy of the direction of the wind that it makes little difference where power stations are sited in so small a country as Britain. But this would be a false conclusion; for there is strong evidence of unduly high levels of radiation among those who live near nuclear stations; so Openshaw's argument is still valid. He concludes that the north-west of Scotland is the best possible place, and it seems hard to dispute this. Yet is such destruction of the natural environment to be tolerated? Or is it merely frivolous to prefer the solitude and beauty of the West Highlands to the safety of thousands of people? Openshaw avoids such emotionally fraught questions.

Finally, Donald Bartlett and James Steele, two professional investigators, trace in some detail the changes in attitude towards nuclear power in America in the last forty years. They rightly insist that the public in general is far more aware of the dangers both to human health and to the environment than they used to be. They therefore argue that it is the prime duty of policy-makers to be open, to admit when decisions have been wrong, and, in the matter of waste disposal, to establish and pub-

lish categories of waste, from the most dangerous to the relatively safe. Only in this way, they argue can appropriate policies for disposal be debated and agreed.

It is clear that we are faced, in 1986, with two main problems. The first is the problem of immediate safety. We have to ask how much leakage there is from nuclear power stations; and, above all, how secure we can feel about accident. If there should be an accident, how can we prepare ourselves for it? The second problem is that of the disposal of nuclear waste. Even if, impossibly, nuclear power stations were 100 per cent safe, they would still generate waste, and nuclear waste will never go away by itself, nor become safe over the years. Both problems are complex and intractable. But neither ought, on those grounds, to be considered as problems only for experts. The greatest need is for the general public to be informed. We, the lay public, have, after all, been educated. We are no longer going to be fobbed off with soothing words. Policy-makers must realize that the price of wide-spread education is increased suspicion and cynicism, in response to bromides and placebos.

Thus it is worse than useless for people to tell us that the risk of nuclear accident is less than the risk of an air-crash or even a railway accident. Nor are we made to feel better by being assured that the average shortening of life from exposure to extra radiation, over the population as a whole, is half a day, or even half an hour. We are in no way encouraged by learning that, over all, the risk of cancer from leaking reactors is less than the risk of cancer from other people's cigarettes. We have the wit to know that such comparisons are meaningless. For one thing, the public knows that the dangers from nuclear accidents are of a totally different kind from the dangers of an air-crash, or even from an earthquake. The public also knows that to speak of "averages" in this context is absurd. Some people will not be affected by radiation at all (that is to say they will not be exposed to it); others, living near to a reactor,

will be affected severely, but may not discover for years what the nature and extent of their sickness will be. There is no possible use in averaging out the radiation consequences over two such totally different populations. Nor are the normal concepts of probability (difficult though these are for most people to grasp) of much interest in this field. If you are insuring your house, actuaries will work out what is a reasonable premium for you to pay. But from the point of view of an insurance company, if your house is going to fall down, it makes no difference to them how or in what manner it falls down. The probability of disaster from nuclear accident is quite different. It is the nature of the risk, not its numerical probability, that frightens us.

But perhaps, since Chernobyl, we have concentrated too much on accident. The longer-term (infinitely long-term) problems of waste disposal would exist even if we were not accident-prone. Here again, the first essential is that those responsible for policy should stop trying to lull the public into a false sense of security. At present, the problem in Britain is how best to dispose of medium and low-level radioactive waste. High-level waste is recycled (though it is dubious whether this process is worth the money and the risks involved. In some ways high-level waste is easier to dispose of than medium or low-level waste). The policy with regard to disposal is settled by reference to what is called the Best Practical Environmental Option (BPEO), a term invented some years ago by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, and adopted by the Department of the Environment as the rationale of all their pollution strategies.

In a paper produced earlier this year, the DOE sought to apply the concept of the BPEO specifically to the disposal of radioactive waste. *Assessment of Best Practical Environmental Options for Management of Low and Intermediate-level Solid Radioactive Waste* did this by attaching numerical weightings to the supposed advantages and disadvantages of

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various options for disposal, offering four different weighting systems, according to different points of view. Thus, from one point of view, health would be more important than disturbance to an environment; from another point of view, cost would be more important than health, and so on. The outcome in each case was a single figure, derived from the balance of advantage against disadvantage, especially the balance of cost against safety. Whichever weighting system they took, miraculously, the answer always came out the same: the best method of disposal was early, shallow burying of waste, in a natural clay soil.

Without entering into the technical questions about whether or not this is in fact a good method of disposal, there are certain general objections to the BPEO as it has been applied to this case. First, and perhaps most obvious, is the objection that not all possible options were considered. Disposal at sea, which might very well be the best and safest option, because it has been put out of court by the action of the National Union of Seamen, was not even considered. It could be said that industrial action has rendered this option impractical, even if best. But in that case all options are impractical, since there is none that will not raise a protest from somebody. Perhaps more important, the separate advantages and disadvantages of each option were concealed by the single-figure outcome. It was assumed that it was possible to combine the concept of cost with that of risk and come up with a single figure, weighing one against the other. But to do this obscures the real decision of value that has to be made. The notion of the BPEO, applied as the Department applied it, suggests, falsely, that whoever you are, whatever you value, there is one best solution to the problem of waste disposal, which can be proved to be so. What is hidden is the fact that we have to decide, at a political, and hence a public, level whether to prefer safety to economy, whether we are, in fact, prepared to pay for our security, and if so how much we are prepared to pay.

The BPEO does not provide a magic, "correct" formula. Thus the DOE paper (itself incredibly difficult to understand) represents a concealed political, or moral, decision. When the present Minister for the Environment, William Waldegrave, recently referred to the BPEO in the House of Commons, in answer to a question about nuclear waste, he spoke as if he could read off from the Ministry's calculations the right answer to the problem. He cannot; and nobody can. It is essentially a matter to be judged of, or decided, taking into account not only facts but fears. We have to begin to raise a question not to be contemplated by politicians or industrialists: the question whether economic considerations must always win. Not being fooled by the magic idea of a BPEO, we must ask whether, when economy demands one course, human safety or even human pleasure and enjoyment another, the safety, agreeableness and enjoyment of life must always be sacrificed. These are, blatantly, questions of value.

The Melbourne newspaper, *The Age*, recently carried a report (July 12, 1986) from the

town of Cattenom, on the river Moselle in France, where four new nuclear reactors are being constructed, the first to start building up power this month. A local teacher, M Nieder-corn, was quoted in these words:

We weren't anti-nuclear at the beginning. We just wanted people to know what was happening. But when we learned about the problems with nuclear waste, and the fact that nuclear energy had not been mastered, we became anti-nuclear. We so nearly won. But in the end money and the fear of unemployment won. The metallurgical industries were dying and people hoped the plan would be the rebirth of the region. The Electricité de France came. I told everyone "We'll make you rich and give you Scotch" and they believed it. It's difficult to fight against money.

The "Green" parties are prepared to take up just this fight. Even if they are not so extreme as to advocate a return to the horse or the candle, they are nevertheless prepared to advocate considerable changes in life-style which would, they recognize, be necessary if we were to reduce the amount of energy we use. Such considerations are, of course, quite general. Too often, however, environmentalists or Green politicians use their persuasive powers only in response to particular issues, where, for example, local residents are protesting against the use of a site for the disposal of waste. The Green party may add its voice to such protests, and the general point is lost among the particular vested interests.

It may well be that "lay" people, those, that is, who have no particular axe to grind, no commitments to foreign governments, no undertakings to provide cheap electricity, no local preservation interests, are better able than politicians or civil servants to acquaint themselves with the facts, and attempt to base sensible and honest general value judgments on these facts, without exaggeration or hysteria. Of course it is one thing to say that the "lay" must make the judgments, quite another to imagine a means by which the judgments they make (even if, improbably, they were unanimous) could contribute to the actual formation of policy. The sense of impotence, of a total inability to influence, let alone determine, the way things happen, must be the most familiar source of uneasiness, in a world where issues are so complicated, outcomes so difficult to predict. All the same, ordinary people, the "lay", still have certain political obligations; and in this matter it seems to me that they are two-fold.

First, we have a duty to demand knowledge, and to refuse reassurances which, coming from "experts", are supposed to be soundly based on indisputable evidence, when they are not. We must not forget that politicians have interests that may be short-term and designed to win votes rather than to secure a future beyond the life of the next Parliament. We must remember, too, that civil servants, probably more influential than politicians in this area, are never prone to think of problems in depth or in general terms, but are always committed to whatever policy seems somehow already to have been decided . . . and understandably. Their job, after all, is to make things work, not to issue moral or political pronouncements. We would not like it if they did. We have a duty, then, to demand that all possible options be considered. Have the consequences of abandoning nuclear power been clearly thought out? What percentage of our electricity is to be produced from nuclear reactors? (We know that France aims to produce 75 per cent of its electricity by nuclear power by 1990.) Can we be told what accidents have occurred in the last ten years, and whether these were the result of faulty design or human error? Can we be told what would happen in the case of disaster, what plans exist for evacuating the locality, and how long it would be before the surrounding country could be made safe (if ever)? If we are to retain our nuclear power stations (and there are very good arguments for doing so) we must insist that we are no longer treated like children from whom disagreeable facts are concealed. If we have to, we must face the risks, knowing what we are doing, and knowing that, in this context, we have chosen to value other things more highly than safety.

Second, I believe we have a more difficult duty, less easy to formulate, but even more important. We have got to learn to think ahead, not in terms of a few years, not even in



"Looking west from the business center", a drawing reproduced from Hugh Ferriss's "romantic vision for a humanistic city of the future", *The Metropolis of Tomorrow* (1929). The Architectural Press. £32.50. 085134 4043.

terms of our own life-time, but much further than that. In the seventeenth century, political philosophy concerned itself exclusively with the rights and duties of members of a single state with regard to their rulers. It was simply not necessary to take into account a wider world. Locke said that "princes" were in the state of nature; they had no duties to one another. International relations were a matter of survival of the strongest. Gradually we have come to recognize that, geographically, we must look beyond the confines of our own country, even if we are still very bad at doing so. At least no political theorist could now sincerely say that what went on in other countries was simply of no concern to him. Now we have to learn to extend our interest further in time, as well as in space. We have to think about what is good or bad for a future infinitely more remote from ourselves than any we have been accustomed to consider.

Nineteenth-century Utilitarianism demanded that a man who was morally responsible would calculate the consequences of his acts, or rather of his *kinds* of acts—cheating, lying, defrauding his neighbours—and would refrain from doing those things which would, overall, bring about more pain than pleasure. But, though this was never clearly stated, consequences were not presumed to flow on into an unending future. The tendency of acts to bring harm or benefit was to be judged, for the most part, according to the wisdom of past ages, but within a reasonably short time-scale. But simple Utilitarianism is difficult, if not impossible to apply when we are concerned with such new phenomena as the development of nuclear power. The consequences are widespread, and may be unforeseeably deferred. Bentham, who had great faith in the possibility of weighing pleasures against pains, would have been daunted by the calculations involved in such a case; and Keynes, who developed his theory of moral probability in order to make consequentialist moral theory more accurately applicable, would not have been able to assess the probabilities of accident or the dangerous accumulation of wastes.

Most moral judgments are made within a moral tradition. But we have no tradition, and only an inadequate vocabulary, to help us make decisions about the environment/hundreds of years hence. Much of our moral vocabulary is

designed to express personal responsibility, personal shame or guilt. We are not able clearly to discuss what ought or ought not to be, in cases so remote from ourselves and our contemporaries. Duty or dereliction of duty seems to have no sense in such a context. If we now make a bad decision about the build-up of nuclear power, or the disposal of nuclear waste, the effects may be harmful only to people we shall never know and whom we find it hard to imagine, since they do not yet exist.

Some philosophers, notably Derek Parfit, have argued that in order to achieve such extended vision we need to reform our idea of the self, with its dependent idea of self-interest. Even the greatest philanthropists of the past have been for the most part bounded by their concept of themselves: their name will be perpetuated, an institution will be founded in which they would take an interest if they were still alive, and with which their descendants may be connected. If we could begin to think of ourselves less as single separate individuals, belonging in a particular time and place, connected to the future, if at all, through our own children and grandchildren, and could think of a looser and more general continuity between ourselves and the world, then perhaps we might gradually come to take more naturally the responsibility we have for the future environment. There is much to be said for such an argument. But self-interest and tunnel-vision are not easily eliminated; nor is our idea of the individual self wholly to be deplored. It is in any case deeply entrenched in our thought and language.

I believe we have a lesser task, more capable of fulfilment. We must educate our policy-makers. We must teach them to be open and honest in the discussion of our nuclear future; and we must make it clear that we will respect them only if they are seen to be looking further ahead than next week, or the next election. The decisions we are faced with are decisions of value, and about these we will not be content simply to follow our leaders. Policy-makers have got to face the psychological factors involved in the use or abandonment of nuclear power. They cannot ignore the fears that we have. What we ask is information, in the light of which we may properly assess whether these fears are justified. Only so can we begin to plan rationally for the future of the species.

## Chestnut stuffing

Roy Jenkins

PAUL JOHNSON (Editor)  
The Oxford Book of Political Anecdotes  
270pp. Oxford University Press. £10.95.  
019214121 X

The Oxford Book of Political Anecdotes is a well-edited book, about the purpose of which I am, however, unclear. Anecdotes are essentially a verbal rather than a written art-form. This indeed springs from the origin of the word, which leads to the second definition given by the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*: "Unpublished details of history." (The first definition—"narrative of detached incident"—is wide-ranging but vague.) A published collection of them is, therefore, in the strict sense a contradiction in terms, although one which the Oxford University Press has persuaded previous editors successfully to make.

What is more to the point is that while anecdotes, probably best told with a certain freedom of recollection which elevates pith over

truth, can illuminate conversation, they make for scrappy and unbalanced reading. Is the primary object to provide a work of reference, almost as if it were a book of jokes for fairly sophisticated after-dinner speakers? If so, then rich though it is in old chestnuts, particularly of the last hundred years, this book must be faulted for incompleteness. Where, for instance, is the story of Curzon and the omnibus conductor who declined to take him to Carlton House Terrace, or of Baldwin and the chance Harrovian travelling companion who (c 1926) asked him "What are you doing now?"

If, on the other hand, it is intended to be the editor's own commonplace book, with passages often more macabre and dramatic than famous or funny, which is what it mostly is up to 1750, that is another matter. It then has to be judged as a work for reading rather than for reference. And here we come up against the limitations of the genre. The passages are mostly too short for a bedtime essay and too long for committing to memory as an aphorism.

Perhaps this is rather churlish. The concep-

## Heart under the choler

Frederic Raphael

AUBERON WAUGH  
Another Voice: An alternative anatomy of Britain  
221pp. Sidgwick and Jackson. £9.95.  
094775271 4

Another Voice is subtitled an alternative anatomy of Britain—an allusion, presumably, to Anthony Sampson's now venerable dissection of the musculature, and ossification, of the body politic. Auberon Waugh is a ruder surgeon than his unsmiling predecessor: he puts the boot in along with the knife. Aesthetics are not on offer. If the victims of Waugh's scalpel—Trade Unionists, Jimmy Goldsmith, Shirley Williams, Cardinal Hume—can expect no mercy, everyone else in the operating theatre is in for a bloody good time. This surgeon not only cuts and thrusts, he keeps up a succession of jokes and jibes (some borrowed, some blue) with entertaining shamelessness. How his admirers do fall about! Yet under the choleric carapace, you can be sure, there beats a twenty-one-carat heart.

In fact, of course, this *Anatomy* is not flesh-and-blood but scissors-and-paste. It is all *papier-mâché*, fashioned from columns (mostly in the *Spectator*) not yet cannibalized for other compilations by publishers eager to recycle Waugh's output in durable form. A week is a long time in journalism, but a compendium of weeks, it is borne in upon us, can approximate to an eternity. Conscious that even dedicated fans may weaken at the prospect of so much unrelieved hilarity laid end to end, without even a day or two's breather in-between, Waugh offers an introduction midway between an apology and a catalogue *raisonnée*. With its help, you can take your plate to his buffet and heap it with your choice of reheated dishes. In a passage of typically savage and vituperative force, the lazy race of reviewers is advised on method: skim the intro and a few pieces, chosen for adulation (unless you want to be haunted by old gags, ink-pellets and honest assessments of your fiction for the rest of your life) or for vilification (if you seriously insist on being called ugly and smelly and a lesbian *Sunday Times* contributor), and then knock out the commissioned wordage. Those guileless enough to act on this hugely inventive and boundlessly satirical advice will have reckoned without the author's characteristic genius: their superficiality will be exposed by an inability to detail the misprints so cunningly left on these highly hilarious pages. While remaining philosophical about the ones I missed, I am able to point out enough errors to show that I have done my blodding stuff.

The evident difficulty about remaining choleric and foremost on a weekly basis is that it becomes hard to distinguish between genuine indignation (of the kind that gave Jvenial his hexametrical fame) and oh-dear-here-I-have-to-go-again-titchiness of the kind that leads the heavily employed Mr Waugh to call the popular press for outrageous stupidity.

(an alternative hobby, one might think, to shooting fish in a barrel) in order that he may come the toff at them. When properly provoked, he can be matchlessly trenchant indeed:

Perhaps Prince Philip sincerely believes that everybody except himself and other members of the Royal Family should be equal. It is a position which others have held before him. God is widely thought to take the same view of the human race, but God is somewhat less vulnerable to public opinion. The middle classes decide what public opinion is to be, and the middle classes will ultimately decide whether or not the Government needs an alternative opposition in Buckingham Palace.

Whether or not this prompts instant comparison with Jonathan Swift (as Mr Waugh's cringing blurbist suggests) must be left to the scholars and pollsters, but it is certainly good enough to remind us why those who like their author fresh may be gulled into acquiring him *cautif*. A sullen purist with some obscure grudge might, however, point out that satire, if that is really what all this stuff is, depends above all on sureness of touch. It is not enough to be rude or vituperative, even at Shirley Williams's tolerant expense, unless you can do it stylishly. Your jokes should, if possible, be your own, and new, rather than saved up from prep school. Is anyone very, very amused by the speculation that an anonymous, supposedly typical British family may really be called "Galtieri or Cvikn, Finkelstein or Pissupski"?

Waugh is a famous columnist, having renounced fiction not because he wasn't very, very good at it but because he couldn't make a living from it. His self-imposed treadmill life is something he endures, like his disabilities, with admirable phlegm, but it really should not have led him to cheat someone he admires as much as the peasant Mathilde, whose price for a crocheted bedspread he persuaded her to cut in half for reasons which apparently have something to do with Catholicism. It is not clear to a heathen mind why *un coeur simple* should be rewarded at pre-1914 prices, even in so backward a region as the Aude, where the Waughs have a *résidence secondaire* to which they retreat when Somerset is clogged with toilers, vinegar-flavoured crisps and caravans.

The columnist's life is full of hazards, not all hilarious. Coming back from holiday, Waugh once opened a letter in which a dedicated reader announced that she was about to commit suicide. The lapse of days meant that it was almost certain that the lady was beyond (or already discovering) salvation, but Mr Waugh wrote her a charming letter as well as a column declaring its contents. As a result, fat, ugly, ditch-dropping people accused him of cruel indifference to a woman for whom he showed indeed tender solicitude. A tetchy twist, with affectations of gentlemanliness, might take the view that it was rather cheap (a) to dictate the lovely letter, (b) to keep a carbon of it, so as to be able to use it as a column-filler and (c) to use the expression "Best wishes" as well as "Yours sincerely". But such is the ill-concealed coddliness of the author that one cannot resist giving him an opportunity for further displays of overpaid intelligence.

may have its faults, but the execution is excellent. Paul Johnson, irascible and unpredictable an ideologue though he often appears, is a fine scholar, whose command of the dramatics of English politics is exceptional. He provides a fast-moving and entertaining introduction, and he edits with knowledge and discrimination.

The richly anecdotal figures, from Wellington to Disraeli to Curzon to Churchill, are of course well served, although it is surprising that Johnson produces nothing from or about Canning (even omitting him from the index), who put at least four phrases into the English language, except for an account of how he could dictate two memoranda at once. Balfour is also treated surprisingly jejune. Campbell-Bannerman, on the other hand, is given much more generous space, and with justification. "Haldane always prefers the backstairs. But it does not matter. The clatter can be heard all over the house", is a very good comment on that distinguished but somewhat flat-footed philosopher statesman, to whom C. B. mostly referred as "Schopenhauer".

Stories of wrong or confused recognition among the notable are nearly always satisfactorily risible. Apart from the Baldwin one, Johnson omits the occasion when an old Irish peer, Lord Portarlington, said to Queen Victoria quite late in her reign: "I remember your face well, but I have forgotten your name." He does, however, include the rather too hackneyed one of the Duke of Wellington's lack of enthusiasm for being confused with Mr George Jones, the portrait painter, as well as the lesser-known one about King Edward VII, the 3rd Marquess of Salisbury and General Sir Redvers Buller. At Salisbury's last audience as Prime Minister, the King presented him with a signed photograph of himself. Salisbury looked at it mystified for some time and then said "Poor Buller".

Almost in this category is the account from Rab Butler via Harold Nicolson's *Diaries* of Churchill at his fortnightly Savoy Hotel lun-

cheon for his Shadow Cabinet saying: "The old man is very good to me. I could not have managed this [Korean] situation had I been in Attlee's place. I should have been called a war-monger." "What old man?" asked David Maxwell Fyfe innocently. "God, Sir Donald", replied Winston. It seems he always called David "Sir Donald". Poor Fyfe seems to have been more unfortunate than "Poor Buller", who merely lost the Battle of Colenso and was replaced as Commander-in-Chief in South Africa by Lord Roberts. To be consistently called "Sir" and "Donald" by Churchill must have been even worse than having the Wool-sack snatched away from him by Harold Macmillan, even if it was to give it to Lord Dilhorne.

Towards the end, one or two of Johnson's prejudices show through. They stem, however, more from his old personal predilections than from his new ideology. Both Aneurin Bevan and Anthony Crosland were unwilling as ministers (and when not) to wear formal clothes, although in Crosland's case it took the odd form of being prepared to wear a dinner jacket, but only if a white tie were stipulated. No doubt had Privy Counsellors still worn court dress in his day he would have been prepared to wear a morning coat when, but only when, knee-breeches were called for. Bevan and Crosland, although without much else in common, had similar motives on this rather boring issue: a mixture of a childish desire to shock and a sense of being superior to such bourgeois baubles. But the approach earns Bevan an anecdote in which he appears as an endearing and eccentric aristocrat, a sort of Lord Hartington of the Left, whereas Crosland is portrayed as an insensitive boor.

This is unfair, but it is also untypical. Paul Johnson in this anthology is interested in drama, wit and style, but not much in partisanship. Mrs Thatcher does not even get a mention. Nor as a matter of fact does Mr Heath, although Lord Wilson and Mr Callaghan get in elliptically.

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**WARREN BARGAD and STANLEY F. CHYET**  
(Editors)  
Israeli Poetry: A contemporary anthology  
273pp. Indiana University Press. \$29.95.  
0253331404

Amir Gilboa died in September 1984; Dan Pagis died earlier this summer. Thus the first generation of Israeli poets is starting to enter the annals of history. Both men, like Yehuda Amichai, were born in Europe and Hebrew was not their mother tongue. As with a novelist like Aharon Appelfeld, the fact that they are European Jews first and Israelis second, allied to the fact that the dreadful history of Europe and the Middle East in their lifetimes has forced them continually to ponder their relations to both Judaism and the State of Israel, makes them unique. There will no doubt be good Jewish writers and good Israeli writers in times to come, but perhaps never again this potent combination.

Amichai was born in Würzburg, Bavaria, in 1924, and came to Palestine with his parents in 1936. He fought with the British in the Middle East during the Second World War and then in the War of Independence and Israel's subsequent wars. Today, when he is not reading his poetry in Britain or America or elsewhere in the world – for he is a wonderful reader and much in demand – he lives in Jerusalem with his family. Here is how he once put it:

I am sitting here now with my father's eyes,  
and with my mother's greying hair on my head,  
in a house that belonged to an Arab  
who bought it from an Englishman  
who took it from a German  
who hewed it from the stones  
of Jerusalem, my city:  
I look upon God's world of others  
who received it from others.  
I am composed of many things  
I have been collected many times  
I am constructed of spare parts  
of decomposing materials  
of disintegrating words. And already  
in the middle of my life, I begin,  
gradually, to return them,  
for I wish to be a decent and orderly person  
when I'm asked at the border, "Have you anything to  
declare?"  
so that there won't be too much pressure at the end  
so that I won't arrive sweating and breathless and  
confused  
so that I won't have anything left to declare.  
The red stars are my heart, the Milky Way  
its blood, my blood. The hot khamsin  
breathes in huge lungs, my life  
pulses close to a huge heart, always within.  
(Translated by Ruth Nevo)



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To talk, as people often do in relation to  
Amichai's poetry, about the speaking voice, is  
not enough. He has his share of striking open-  
ing lines, but the main characteristic of the  
verse is its apparent effortlessness. But that is  
the miracle – that it exists at all, without any of  
the usual props of poetry.

There is a refrain of sorts, of course, as in  
much of his poetry, but it is really no more than  
the speaker half-repeating a phrase in order to  
keep a hold on what he is trying to say. What  
lends it its surprising authority, I think, is the  
way the ethical and the aesthetic reinforce each  
other. Nearly all the poems are in the first  
person and nearly all of them are in some way  
autobiographical, yet what the "I" asserts is  
that it is not a solid entity, that it is made up of  
others, of parents, of ancestors, of the words of  
tradition, and that soon it will return to them.  
It is as though the long journey taken by Eliot  
from the violent rejection of the self in  
*Prufrack* to the quiet acceptance of self in  
*Burnt Norton* was something that Amichai had  
never needed to go through: what Eliot had to  
learn so painfully was there, self-evident, from  
the start.

Nor is there any sense of a painful renuncia-  
tion as there is in so much Christian poetry.  
The very flatness of "for I wish to be a decent  
and orderly person" makes it impossible for us  
to tell whether the speaker imagines that wish  
is being fulfilled or not. What happens between  
the impulse to speak and the utterance of such  
a remark? Amichai is fond of this kind of  
effect. In a superb poem, sadly not included in  
any of the books under review, he speaks of the  
act of writing poetry as being an act of transla-  
tion, not invention: "Quietly we will transfer  
words from man to man, / from one tongue to  
other lips, / and not knowingly, like a father /  
who transfers the features of his dead father's  
face to his son / and himself doesn't look like  
either." The refrain is "we must not get ex-  
cited", because excitement will get in the way  
of clarity and honesty, will do harm to the  
translator's job, which is concerned with truth  
and accuracy, not emotion or the celebration  
of individual worth. Yet how much emotion is  
there in that repeated "we must not get ex-  
cited"? How much of an injunction is it to  
himself rather than to others?

For the poet as translator of the world there  
are words for everything and everything is in  
need of translation. The only injunction is to be  
accurate, not to get excited. That is why  
Amichai has produced so much – nine volumes  
of poetry, a novel, radio plays – and why some  
of the poems flat and read more like notes.  
But it is ethically and aesthetically important  
for him that we realize that speech is a gift and  
that part of what it means to be human is to be  
a creature which makes objects to relieve its feel-  
ings, objects which are elegy and celebration at  
the same time. "Anything and everything can be  
a trigger for such artefacts:

I found an old textbook of animals,  
Brehm, second volume, birds:  
Description, in sweet language, of the lives  
of crows, swallows and jays. A lot of mistakes  
in Gothic printing, but a lot of love: "Our  
feathered friends", "emigrate to warmer  
countries", "nest, dotted egg, soft plumage,  
the nightingale", "prophets of spring",  
The Red-Breasted Robin.  
Year of printing 1913, Germany  
on the eve of the war which became  
the eve of all my wars.

My good friend, who died in my arms and in his  
blood  
in the sands of Ashdod, 1948, in June.  
Oh, my friend,  
red-breasted.  
(Translated by Amichai)

What happens in this poem happens at some  
distance from the words. The words dramatize  
for us the speaker leaving through the book,  
and then the sudden shock of memory. But the  
words manage both to celebrate the book ("In  
sweet language") and to make of the sudden  
memory of his dead friend something more  
than mere pain, without in any way masking  
the pain: How much gets said, about our cen-  
tury, about human beings, how simply and how  
briefly.

Like much post-war East European poetry,  
Amichai's is poetry which can travel. Because  
it is so simple in diction and syntax, gaining its  
richness from the juxtaposition of phrases and



"Man in Old Age Home, Jerusalem, 1976". From "Being Seen", a photo essay by Rodney Smith in ORIM: A Jewish journal at Yale, Volume 1, No 1, Autumn 1985 (ORIM, Box 1904A, Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520, USA).

images rather than from their density or com-  
plexity, it does not pose problems for the trans-  
lator in the way that the poetry of Rilke or  
Shlonsky or Eliot does. And indeed what work  
of his has appeared in English until now has  
never read like translation. Two collections,  
*Time* and *Amen*, have been published by  
Oxford University Press, translated by  
Amichai himself with help from Ted Hughes,  
and Ruth Nevo brought out in 1977 a transla-  
tion of the long poem, *Travels*, now reprinted  
by the Sheep Meadow Press of New York with  
the original Hebrew on facing pages. But both  
the Viking selection and the twenty-page selec-  
tion in Warren Bargad and Stanley Chyet's  
anthology, *Israeli Poetry*, reveal how very deli-  
cate is the task of translating such poetry, and  
they do so, sad to say, because they so often fail  
(the Indiana volume does much better with  
Pagis, where the translations are often bril-  
liant).

A couple of examples will show what I mean.  
Here are a few lines in the *Travels* devoted to  
Bialik, the founding father of modern Hebrew  
poetry:

Bialik, bald knight among olive trees,  
wrote no poems in the land of Israel, for he kissed  
the earth and chased away flies and mosquitoes  
with his writing hand,  
and wiped sweat  
from his vermillion brain and in the khamsin  
placed on his forehead a handkerchief from the  
Diaspora.

This is Ruth Nevo. Stephen Mitchell, in the  
Viking volume, is more literal: he sticks to  
Amichai's five lines, and translates "hands"  
not "hand" in the fourth line, but his version  
reads like a translation:

Bialik, a bald knight among olive trees,  
didn't write poems in the land of Israel, because he  
kissed  
the ground and shoed flies and mosquitoes with his  
writing hands and wiped sweat from his rhyming  
brain  
and in the khamsin put over his head a handkerchief  
from the Diaspora.

One of Amichai's finest poems, his "Circus  
Animals' Desertion", tells how a man who has  
been away from his country for a long time gets  
to speak more and more precisely, but this  
precision is "like precise clouds of summer / on  
their blue background", which will never turn  
into rain, or like those who were once lovers  
and go on mouthing the words of love though  
the feeling has long gone. The last verse reads,  
in Amichai's own translation:

But I, who have stayed here, dirty my mouth  
and my lips and my tongue.  
In my words there is garbage of soil  
and refuse of lust and dust and sweat.  
Even the water I drink in this dry land,  
is urine and semen and memories of love,  
is urine recycled back to me  
through complicated circuits.

The final image is marvellous, more resonant  
even than Yeats, just because it is so down-to-  
earth, so very precise. Chaim Bloch, who  
translates the poem in the Viking selection,  
completely ruins it:

In this dry land even the water I drink...

is urine,  
recycled back to me by a twisted route.

Nor have the translators been helped by their  
publisher's decision to cram the poems on to  
the page so that they are given no chance to  
breathe. *Travels* takes up just twenty-six pages  
of the Viking volume to the sixty-six pages of  
English in the Sheep Meadow Press edition  
(sixty pages in the Webster Review/Meadow  
Press edition of 1977, which prints only Nevo's  
English). The Oxford volumes never have  
more than one poem per page, which is how a  
poet should be presented; the Viking volume  
runs the poems into each other with hardly a  
break.

Moreover, despite his simplicity of diction  
and syntax, Amichai is a richly allusive poet,  
full of glancing, ironic references to the Bible  
and the Hebrew classics. We must remember  
that a Hebrew writer's relation to the Bible,  
and his expectations of his audience's relation  
to it, are much closer to those of an English  
poet of the seventeenth century than of the  
twentieth. It's not just that everybody knows  
the Bible; it is that their relation to it is one of  
friendly intimacy. Thus David Avidan, an  
Israeli-born poet, can write: "The seven / Pat  
cows asked / The seven lean cows: How, /  
Really, how do you manage / To keep so trim?"  
Amichai is never so simple. In the opening  
stanza of "A Sort of Apocalypse" he takes the  
famous biblical phrase which represents peace  
and contentment, "They shall sit every man  
under his vine and under his figtree and none  
shall make them afraid", and turns it inside  
out: "The man under his fig tree telephoned  
the man under his vine: / 'Tonight they will  
surely come. / Armour the leaves, / Lock up the  
tree, / Call home the dead and be prepared.'"  
Again, in the *Jerusalem 1967* sequence he re-  
fers to a famous line of Yehuda Ha-Levi, "My  
heart is in the East and I am at the Edge of the  
West" (did Donne know the poem?), and then  
goes on to play with his own name, the older  
poet's, and the Judean desert. The Viking  
volume translates this as "the walling that I  
heard inside me / has always been from my  
Yehudean desert", which makes little sense  
and is not glossed. Here surely was a chance to  
annotate each poem quite fully; instead, there  
are three pages of notes (there is nothing on the  
vine and the fig-tree), and these come without  
page references, which makes them awkward  
to use.

I would recommend that anyone interested  
in Amichai get hold of *The Modern Hebrew  
Poem Itself*, edited by Stanley Burnshaw and  
published by Schocken Books, or even Carmi's  
*Penguin Book of Hebrew Verse*, and follow  
through the translations and commentaries  
provided there. I would also hope that  
Amichai might be better served the next time a  
publisher decides to bring out a selection of his  
poems in English. He is one of our great poets,  
and a very accessible one. Meanwhile, there  
are his own translations and Ruth Nevo's to be  
going on with, and the poet himself is often to  
be found in this country, reading in both Hebrew  
and English. Once one has heard his quiet, even  
tones, precise, distanced and passionate, one  
can never forget them.

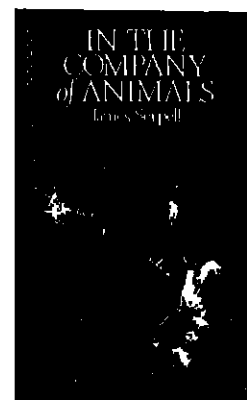
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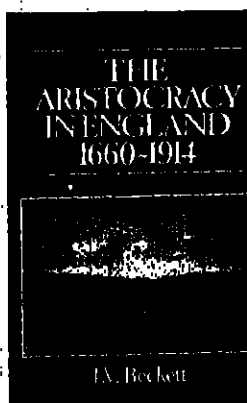
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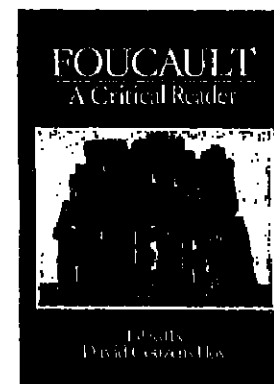
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## Song of the amateur psychologist

It is a deep-rooted  
far stirring in strong shadow kingdoms  
and ripens among  
the slow rustle  
of that midnight orchard  
whose woven branches are  
soft, plump or stretching, are too small  
to dream of, myriad,  
intercellular;  
in timid contact  
of whose slow rhythmic fingers  
are woven the proud worlds.

Cathedral caverns  
in not glinting limestone  
water there changing always  
the fretted hollow curves;  
high vaulted arches  
of the uncharted cellars,  
and, it is a discovery,  
too large for a short stride  
too steep, there pass  
downwards beneath them  
these narrow and stone stairs.

But now rest yourself a moment, and lean  
on the great pillars, feel  
how in darkness they hum softly  
holding the lit palace  
and hearing riot in the halls.  
Men come here often  
with lanterns carefully,  
looking over their shoulders  
and feeling it something of an expedition  
to choose just the one vintage  
that is called for.  
Also on great occasions  
they unbrick old archways  
and there lie guarded  
the rich tawny  
secret potions;  
they that were buried  
in an autumn  
long past; are ruby,  
are precious, aged  
now, potent, secure.

Strike a light before we go on;  
we need, rather, the sane assurance  
and yellow courage of your candle.  
Guard him well however do not let him  
peer from your fist too rashly at the grooming  
there is a strong and cold wind up the stairs.

Let us descend now  
but carefully, they are high steps  
and steep, for walking.  
After a dozen of them  
there is an even darkness  
that has waited so long  
it is not a light thing to disturb,  
and they go on down  
beyond that, it is not easy  
to imagine what we might see  
if we were holding a light house in our hands.  
Might there not be—might there not—  
the unchained  
the insane perspective  
the no end  
and your cry recoiling—

ah, I can quite imagine you saying it, with an air of apocalyptic  
and desperate capability, sincerity, security almost—

"The low roof goes  
down, the stairs  
arriving proudly  
at no final pinpoint  
go straight down  
only, down always."

\* Braincell Pseudopodia [Empson]

[1926]

*Empson's first recorded poem, written by June 29,  
1920, aged 13; text taken from the autograph book of  
a school contemporary, J. A. Simson.*

Mother, saying Anne good night,  
Feared the dark would cause her fright.  
"Four angels guard you," low she said,  
"One at the foot and one at the head—"

"Mother—quick—the pillow!!—There!!!  
Missed that angel, skimmed his hair.  
Never mind, we'll get the next.  
Ooh! but angels make me vexed!!!"

Mother, shocked, gasped feebly "Anne!!!"  
(A pillow disabled the water-can).  
Said Anne, "I won't have things in white  
Chant prayers about my bed all night."

Not but they die, the terrors and the dreams,  
Not but they die. In the long run the sane man  
Comes out best. He is dead too. The themes

Of despair and triumph so far always outran  
Rumination in writing. The short view  
Could be so long it saw where it began.

But what reflections are much gain to you.  
Not to imagine is a thing to claim.  
Remember what you once wanted to do

And will want to have done when the time came,  
Then you need seldom feel and short sight  
Is the magnifying glass able for the flame.

## Address to a tennis-player

Gracious are you still unaltered, halted, untired no larger, Peter, still lively competent  
"So long" and so long after, laughter and after all no, thou art Peter, upon this rock I  
build.

(Oh petering out no, unaltered but very rocky, very trying, flying the Blue Peter,  
beaten why, on the rocks, crying, an old crock, cracking up breaking up, even trying  
making up, oh never mind, a mind made up.)

Peter Pan, Scarborough Rock. I crack up Peter.

Unbeaten, beaten gold, a gold repeater, unhand me, minute hand, cold clock that  
rocks the cradle, lifeline crack rocket racquet, planned stand caught first-court grand  
stand, unbeaten, racks the world. Knock, it stays unaltered, all rock, sweeter to say Paul  
meeter to run amok, to shock St Paul's dean and chapeetre, sheet attraction,  
oss-assuefaction, petri- or putri, Peter a better faction, knock knock it shall remain  
unlocked, third not the clock stopped, rocked, dropped, cock cocked amiddden promptly  
crew to grew to dears, beautied but grouted ears, pouted about his peers, boudobred  
abounded, powdered or peerless, reappears.

Biers, a rock of peat as, bares bears purr peering to his burrs, Bar star, starring poor  
staring Peter; thus far no, burthen rock-girt, further; three-crowned, weeping, a triple  
crowing; bitter to butter, goes out, to fair well, Simple to Simon Peter; a rock for bread,  
a rock's egg for a pie. I Am That is it I Lord, give them Peter, they dare, he bears, scarlet,  
Herod's purple, not Christ's, Pall's. Speech-mitre Peter, key and lock bewray thee, he  
carrying, Iscarlot, can they deny Peter, mock wearing Christopher renamed. Pie rock  
but spy Lord, Peter face-owner hungry, tossed Pan-cake arse-end, Peter across  
ascending, upside scream cream down, once rot, hot cross buns.

The ages change, and they impose their rules.  
It would not do much good to miss the bus.  
We must endure, and stand between two fools.

Two colonies of Europe now form schools  
Holding absolute power, both of them fatuous.  
The ages change, and they impose their rules.

One claims the State is naked between ghouls  
The other makes it total Octopus.  
We must endure, and stand between two fools.

A says No Bath not Superheated steam. B cools  
This off by Only Solid Ice. For us  
The ages change, and they impose their rules.

Both base their pride upon ill-gotten tools  
And boast their history an Exodus.  
We must endure, and stand between two fools.

There is world and time; the Fates have got large spoils;  
There need not only Europe make a fuss.  
The ages change, and they impose their rules.  
We must endure, and stand between two fools.

## Myth

Young Theseus makes a mission of his doom  
And strides from narrow to more narrow room.  
His hand, a flame on the sand powder-train,  
Hisses, well certain that the clue will find,  
And crumbles it behind,  
The Minotaur to gain.

No victim yet could the sand rope renew.  
At least he holds a secondary clue.  
He, least surprised, has this escape devised:  
Wind he the spinster's wool, his sail unfolds  
Where Ariadne holds  
Her cobweb, ill-advised.

[1929]

## Two songs from a libretto

You advise me coldly then to accept whatever  
Drifts from the casual turning of the day;  
Not to order an assured heart; never  
To look down the coherent vestige of my way;

Secure in my bars, only, to let all pass;  
Hear now my marriage, now my funeral bell;  
Sure of a safe continuance of darkness,  
Of remaining, in my heart, inviolable.

ii  
Simply we do not know what are the turnings  
Expound our polys of obscure desires.  
What Minotaur in irritable matched burnings  
Years and shall gore her intricate my fires.

Simply that no despair known of knowing  
Inth continent compact continuable  
Would mine the minor rapture of her going  
Would leave me lifeless but not despicable.

Simply I shall not answer for what answer  
She may on her return return, or helms  
Or masters the same tortured dancer.  
Simply the mechanism overwhelms.

\* Undermining, mining for metal, lesser, in minor key, under age. [Empson]

[? October 1927]

## Letter vi. A marriage.

Rejoice where possible all hares of March  
And any daffodils not forced at this date.  
I too attempt an epithalamion  
Never to be thrust on your unwilling notice  
Still less before the public, annotated.  
Life's not more strange than this traditional theme.

Terrified by the purity of your dry beauty  
Dry tough and fresh as the grass on chalk downs—  
The metaphor now seems stale to me only because  
It drove me younger to as empty a love—  
I have not dared mention to you even the ideal  
Version of love sent neatly in typescript  
Not altered before publication  
And drowned on meeting in my interminable yattering conversation.  
My life's more weak than this traditional theme.

Envisioning however the same beauty in taxiboys  
And failing to recognize in one case  
What with drink and the infantilism of the Japanese type  
The fact that it had not yet attained puberty  
I was most rightly (because of another case  
Where the jealousy of the driver seemed the chief factor)  
—Not indeed technically, named only in vernacular newspapers,  
And who knows who knows—  
Deported from that virtuous and aesthetic country;  
Life being as strange as this traditional theme.

I remember only once bathing in the sight of your eyes  
Paying some attention to this bloodless series  
—One would think to the first—the grey eyes open  
Large milky lit fastened steadily on me  
Not knowing what to think of what might come next  
Supposing I was ever to stop haranguing the tea party;  
There is a social weight on the traditional theme.

It seemed to me impossible to admit that such a signal  
(Of which I was certain, which you would now certainly deny)  
So dissolving and so noble, had been even recognized,  
Still less, having sent them to their owner out of a clownish honesty,  
To make sensual capital out of writings  
Of a sort so much lectured on  
As to be practised with decency only for clinical purposes.  
Life is allied to this traditional theme.

Nor am I sure I did not imagine a comparison  
—I was at least hushed and ashamed by those perhaps misinterpreted eyes—  
To the eyes I was to see not long after on my mother,  
Thank God not since as yet, cool, liquid, larger than possible,  
Expecting ill-treatment, inquiring, a young girl's,  
When after inducing a goodnatured virgin to seduce me  
In a morass of mutual misunderstandings, I was kicked out  
From a settled job, and hoped I had escaped from you.  
But life was as strange as this traditional theme.

One of these poems at least occurred, long after being written.  
In the next bed to you in a pub in Vienna  
I watched the moon shadow of the window upright  
Walk clear across neck and face, in perhaps half an hour,  
Continually illuminating new beauties,  
Placing in you one minute after another everything  
I know of admirable in the history of man.  
There is not much more in this traditional theme.

I as in one instant felt during that time  
By a trick with time I have known otherwise  
Only in the absurd race of an ill-designed chemistry examination  
Where the quarters struck consecutively; but that I won;  
Perhaps inversely too in the still photograph  
Of shooting a snipe, already behind me, before I knew I had tried  
—I am trying to remember triumphs—  
What else but this is the traditional theme?

Maintained one exhausting ecstasy  
Interrupted only at moments by a nuisance  
A form of self-consciousness and delight, through which I now know that  
(this occurred.)

As the shadow passed to your hair, leaving only truth, I spoke.  
You woke and understood this at once. A porcine  
Expression of complacent pleasure  
Rounded with a fine clang my series  
Before you turned over and hid the face under the bedclothes.  
One could fit this into the traditional theme.

[1935]

These poems are taken from *The Royal Beasts* and other works  
by William Empson, edited by John Haffenden, to be published by Chatto  
and Windus on November 13.



# American notes

## Christopher Hitchens

In 1980, on the centenary of Albert Einstein, the Smithsonian Institution sponsored two colloquia under the general heading of "The Muses Flee Hitler". The subject was the large emigration of talent and genius from Nazi Germany to the United States, a topic that has been fairly extensively treated in studies of such varied figures as Brecht, Reich, Einstein himself and Marcuse. In the course of the preparation for the colloquia, however, an aspect of this process was touched upon which has yet to get the attention it deserves.

It seems that a significant number of these exiled savants, either because they were Jewish, or politically unsound, or relatively unknown, experienced great difficulty in securing teaching posts or research positions. As a result, a substantial number of them were invited to take up residence at the segregated black colleges of the period. Gabrielle Simon Edgcomb, herself a refugee from the Berlin of the 1930s and now a poet in Washington, DC, has made it her business to unearth this fascinating period of co-operation.

Shortly before his death, the civil rights leader Julius [Robson] gave a talk about his education and mentioned his graduate studies at Howard University, Washington's black campus, in the pre-war years. He said that his entire view of the world had been changed by the German and Austrian Jews who were attached to the faculty at that time, making a special mention of Dr Otto Nathan, the economist and lifelong friend of Albert Einstein, who had been a prominent influence. Since then, Ms Edgcomb has identified more than fifty important refugee scholars who had found sanctuary at black colleges as varied as Talladega University in Alabama, Fisk University in Memphis,

Tennessee and Lincoln University in Pennsylvania.

The story is a heartening one in many ways, and a disheartening one in others. Many of the exiles had encountered discrimination because, in the words of that weird expression of the time, they were "premature anti-fascists". Others suffered from discrimination because of their Jewishness (Ms Edgcomb has found one letter of recommendation which states reassuringly that the applicant doesn't "look" all that Semitic). But the partnership established in those years was to prove a lasting one. In a little-known message to the Urban League, a leading civil rights organization, Albert Einstein wrote in 1946:

The worst disease is the treatment of the Negro. Everyone who is not used from childhood to this injustice suffers from the mere observation. Everyone who freshly learns of this state of affairs at a mature age, feels not only the injustice, but the scorn of the principles of the Fathers who founded the United States that "all men are created equal".

In his recent review of *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the universities*, a most absorbing book by the Princeton historian Ellen W. Schrecker, C. Vann Woodward draws attention in passing to the little-known fact that it was non-denominational black colleges which very often gave shelter to persecuted and unjustly dismissed teachers in the 1950s. It would be very surprising if there did not turn out to be a connection here.

Gabrielle Edgcomb is a Fellow of the Anson Phelps Stokes Institute, which will accept tax deductible donations for this project. If there is anyone who would like to help underwrite the research (interviewing survivors, combing through the libraries) then they should write to me at 915 Massachusetts Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002. It would be such a loss if this episode did not find a chronicler, and

funds at the moment are very low.

A few years ago, visiting the Philadelphia Art Museum to see the paintings of Thomas Eakins, I was arrested at the top of the steps. Bang in the middle of the forecourt, just where you couldn't miss it on your way towards the neo-classical entrance, was a crudely cast bronze of a boxer with gloved hands clasped over his head in a victory salute. On the plinth of this item was inscribed the single word "Rocky". A sentence underneath spoke, in bronze lettering, of the way in which that great motion picture had captured the "spirit of Philadelphia and it's [sic] people". It seemed astounding that this could ever have been erected on the approach to one of the finest buildings on the East Coast. I have just heard that it has been removed, and I mention the fact in order to reassure those who are worried about the cult of Sylvester Stallone. There are limits. There really are.

Readers of John Updike's *Roger's Version* may have got the impression, from the character who hopes to deduce God's existence from the laws of nuclear physics, that the anti-evolutionists are getting more polished and sophisticated. In point of fact, Dale Kohler is still untidy. Last week, a Federal court began to hear evidence in a case brought by Christian fundamentalists who want to outlaw teaching of "humanism" in schools. And later this autumn, the Supreme Court itself will consider the constitutionality of a Louisiana law entitled "The Balanced Treatment for Creation-Science and Evolution-Science Act". Passed in 1981 and challenged by teachers and scientists, the act stipulates that children must be taught, without favouring one or the other, both evolution and creationism. As Gerald Skoog, a former president of the National Science Teachers Association, has put it, there would be as good a case for the "value-free" presentation of Ptolemaic astronomy. But nobody demands that because it does not bear on the teaching of Genesis, which is what the fundamentalist lobby cares about. Seventy-two Nobel Prize-winning scientists have filed a brief with the Supreme Court, joined by seventeen state academies of science and the American Anthropological Association. Their concern is partly for education itself, and partly based on fear that the United States would lose points in the technological race if its younger generation had to spend time fooling around with creationism.

Given that the most recent case would involve the re-writing of textbooks and curricula, there have inevitably been solemn comparisons with the notorious Tennessee "monkey trial" of 1925, when Clarence Darrow humbled William Jennings Bryan (described imperiously by H. L. Mencken as "the idol of all morondom"). The difference is that while creationism was the rule in those days, there is

now a consensus on evolution if not on Darwinism. This allows the "creationists" to pose as a censored and excluded minority of underdogs, rather than as the losers in a long argument. By the spring we will know whether the Supreme Court is open to the argument that "secular humanism is a religion".

Late last month I answered my telephone to a lady identifying herself as Tessa Papas. "You don't know me, but my husband used to be a cartoonist - for the *Manchester Guardian*. You probably don't remember." Without pause for thought I said, "The Mouse". It was a summons back to the time of Vicky, when Bill Papas, who succeeded David Low, used to embellish the paper every day, and embellish his cartoons with an inquisitive rodent as a kind of signature. I never knew what had become of him after 1969, when he abruptly turned in the job. I'm willing to bet that a lot of readers of my age will have the same reaction.

They may be pleased to hear that Bill Papas is now living in Portland, Oregon, and is planning to become an American citizen. He has just mounted a very successful exhibition of his drawings in the Rotunda of the Russell Building in the Senate to which, after the telephone call, I took myself. *Papas' America* is a record of thousands of miles on the road, with sketches from the Amish country in Pennsylvania, the boardwalk on Venice beach at Santa Monica, the garment district of New York, the sunset district of Miami and more. Where I'm able to judge, I'd say that he has caught the scene and atmosphere very well. (My favourite: a child having a soda next to a cop in a diner. The sign on the wall says "No Profanity". Location: the highway outside Lynchburg, Virginia.)

The collection comprises 150 illustrations in colour with an accompanying text and is available in a limited edition from Papas's Studio, 1306 NW Hoyt Street, Portland, Oregon 97209. The mouse doesn't feature. I asked about it and was told that when Papas was in his ancestral Greece in the 1960s, he found that his Greek wasn't good enough to complain about the criers in his hotel room. Seizing a pencil, he drew the offender. The reception was so good that he incorporated it in what he now thinks of as his long-ago political phase.

A prize of some description should be awarded to Mr Hilton Kramer, founder and editor of the *New Criterion* and author of some muscular recent criticism in the form of *The Revenge of the Philistines*. Deciding to launch a violent attack on Mr David Rieff for the insufficiencies of his revisionism, he refers to him throughout the diatribe as a member of "the Sontag circle". The reference, which occurs in the title and *passim*, is to the celebrated Susan. Susan Sontag is David Rieff's mother. Mr Rieff may not have evolved fast enough for Mr Kramer (the point at issue is cultural anti-communism) but he can hardly be expected to evolve out of "the Sontag circle" without betraying the "family values" which the *New Criterion* is otherwise so staunch in upholding.

# Letters

## Václav Havel

Sir, - E. M. Forster remarked that, if he had to choose between betraying his country and betraying his friend, he hoped he would have the courage to betray his country. Ernest Gellner, in his interesting discussion of Václav Havel (October 3), rightly dismisses the remark as silly and self-righteous. He then goes on to say that "in Eastern Europe, the idea that it is better to deceive the State than to deceive a friend is a commonplace truism, not a badge of coy Enlightenment".

It is surely evident that the "commonplace truism" testified to by the experience of Eastern Europe has nothing to do with E. M. Forster's remark. To deceive the State is not necessarily to deceive one's country. The two deceptions are comparable only when the State represents the country, and it is precisely this which the States of Eastern Europe do not do. Men like Havel, who are loyal to their friends, are also loyal to their country. For they are acting to affirm the real allegiance of Czechs, and to uphold the moral expectations and the respect for law which are definitive of the Czech experience. It is more obvious to a Czech even than it is to an Englishman, that "country" and "State" are different ideas. The idea of the *vlast* was fundamental to the Czech sense of identity, long before there was such a thing as a Czechoslovak State. The word itself - cognate with *vlastnit*, to own, and with *vlastnost*, property - summarizes the aspirations and the moral strength of the Charter movement, for which Havel is so eloquent a spokesman. While every Czech may hope for a State in which *vlast* and *vlasta* coincide, it is clear that, until they do so, the State has no title to the loyalty which it claims. If the Charter movement is of special importance it is because it recognizes that a State must rule by law if it is to be representative of a country, and that this requires precisely that separation of State and society which the Communist party will not tolerate. In this way the Charter movement has become one of the most important exercises in constitutional thinking in Eastern Europe, and one from which we too may learn. Communism gained power by betrayal - by encouraging people to betray their country for the sake of an idea. And in betraying their country, people also betrayed their friends. To see what is objectionable in the stance glorified by E. M. Forster, therefore, we should look at it from the point of view of the Chartists - living witnesses to the value of loyalty in a place where loyalty has been displaced from power. We will then reject the assumption that one can betray one's country and remain loyal to one's friend.

J. W. BRUEGEL,  
21 Connaught Drive, London NW1.

## Roman Law

Sir, - Robin Seager's review (October 3) pays *The Oxford History of the Classical World* a parting compliment: "This book covers almost everything". In fact there is one colossal omission. The handsome volume has nothing on law. Yet their law library was the Romans' greatest intellectual achievement and their most enduring, entire and direct legacy to modern Europe. Is Oxford mindful of its debts? By the admission of its own new history, but for Roman law its university might have found itself elsewhere, even at Northampton (see pp 15-21 of *The History of the University of Oxford*, Volume One, 1984, edited by J. I. Catto).

PETER BIRKS,  
Department of Civil Law, University of Edinburgh,  
Old College, South Bridge, Edinburgh.

## Oskar Kokoschka

Sir, - Perhaps Norbert Lynton has the kind of second sight of which Oskar Kokoschka would have been envious. Certainly one of his three hunches about the letters scrawled in the sky above the self-portrait as "Knight Errant" (October 3) appears to be uncannily accurate.

Soon after my biography of the painter was published, Heinz Spielman, co-editor of the *Briefe*, told me that Kokoschka had once admitted to him that what he intended to paint in the heavens were the letters COS, the initials of the girl who brought him cigarettes when he was convalescing from the wounds inflicted by Cossacks on the Eastern front. During further work on the sky the lower part of the "O" became obscured and the "C" was transformed into a roughly drawn "E".

It is not only the woman that biographers should more often look for. There is also the possibility that the trivial provides more likely explanations than the arcane.

FRANK WHITFORD,  
69 High Street, Gt Wilbraham, Cambridge.

## 'The Earls of Creation'

Sir, - The publisher of the paperback reprint of James Lees-Milne's *The Earls of Creation*, reviewed briefly in your issue of August 15, as well as leaving out the excellent illustrations in the original version, has made life difficult for the reader by reprinting the original index while changing the pagination of the text. The reader of the paperback thus needs to adjust every page number in the index as he uses it. Your reviewer might usefully have noted this point as it could deter some potential purchasers of the book. Does it apply to others in this reprint series of National Trust Classics?

DAVID J. HALL,  
125 Oxford Road, Cambridge CB4 3PL.

achieved in a relatively backward Austria by way of revolution in Greater Germany", with the result that "many socialists had found it hard to reject the *Anschluss*, even though it came in a Nazi uniform". The facts are that Otto Bauer, the exiled leader of the Austrian Socialists, while rejecting the *Anschluss* "in Nazi uniform", argued in an article, published in May 1938, that the liberation of Austria could not be achieved by the remnants of the Schuschnigg régime, but only by a *gesamtdeutsche* revolution of the workers both of Germany and Austria. He believed that from such a revolutionary Greater Germany the Austrian workers would be unwilling to secede. Bauer died in Paris on July 5, 1938. Had he lived longer, he would certainly have revised his original reaction to Hitler's annexation of Austria.

The case of Karl Renner is different. When the Nazis arranged a "plebiscite" for April 10, 1938, to "ratify" Hitler's action, they exerted pressure on Renner - who in 1919 as State Chancellor of Austria had demanded the merger of his country with democratic Germany - to issue a pro-*Anschluss* declaration. Renner gave in (a move condemned by Bauer from abroad), but had the courage to say in his statement that as a Social Democrat he could not agree with the method by which the *Anschluss* of 1938 had been carried out.

J. W. BRUEGEL,  
21 Connaught Drive, London NW1.

## Roman Law

Sir, - Robin Seager's review (October 3) pays *The Oxford History of the Classical World* a parting compliment: "This book covers almost everything". In fact there is one colossal omission. The handsome volume has nothing on law. Yet their law library was the Romans' greatest intellectual achievement and their most enduring, entire and direct legacy to modern Europe. Is Oxford mindful of its debts? By the admission of its own new history, but for Roman law its university might have found itself elsewhere, even at Northampton (see pp 15-21 of *The History of the University of Oxford*, Volume One, 1984, edited by J. I. Catto).

PETER BIRKS,  
Department of Civil Law, University of Edinburgh,  
Old College, South Bridge, Edinburgh.

## Austria and Nazism

Sir, - May I point out a misunderstanding in Robert Knight's excellent analysis "The Waldheim context: Austria and Nazism" (October 3). According to the author, "Austro-Marxism had argued that socialism could only be

## 'Relevance: Communication and Cognition'

Sir, - We enjoyed Richard E. Grandy's warm words about *Relevance: Communication and cognition* (September 19). Honesty compels us to admit, though, that the book reviewed is not the one we wrote.

First, the book reviewed rejects "the image of language as a code". The book we wrote argues in some detail that a language is a code, but that verbal communication involves much more than the mere encoding and decoding of messages. The originality of our book is that it tries to describe exactly what, apart from encoding and decoding, is involved. Grandy believes that the results will not impress code theorists because the abilities involved are "mysterious" and known "to involve extremely complex information processing". We think a theory of these complex and mysterious processes - and ours is the only one we know of - should interest anyone working in the field.

Second, the book reviewed makes the fuddy-duddy Euclidean assumption that all knowledge lies in deductive relations among linguistic structures, and ignores the fact that "some cognitive scientists are now seeking broader horizons for their discipline". That book is rightly criticized for neglecting the role in cognition of perception and visual imagery. Much fun is made of the idea, apparently implicit in the book reviewed, that humans find their way around by translating perceptual problems into sets of geometrical propositions, or that they can recognize colours without some form of visual memory. By contrast, the book we wrote explicitly claims that the mind has a variety of representational systems, both perceptual and conceptual, and emphasizes the role in cognition of such non-representational properties as accessibility and strength of assumptions. It also offers not only a new account of deduction, but a new (and non-logical) account of human non-demonstrative (non-deductive) abilities.

Third, the book reviewed, though apparently about verbal communication, contains no treatment of metaphor, irony, presupposition, disambiguation, implicature and other topics one would expect to find in such a work. The book we wrote contains original theories in all these areas. For example, it explicitly rejects the standard assumption, repeated without comment by Grandy, that "the quest for a metaphorical meaning begins only . . . when we can judge the literal meaning to be irrelevant". We show, with a wealth of examples, that the literal meaning is not the first, but the last, to be considered. Clearly, the relevant pages, over a quarter of the book we wrote, were missing from Grandy's text.

We hope this letter will avert any possible misunderstanding resulting from this unfortunate mixup at the printer's, and look forward with interest to your review of the book we wrote.

DEIRDRE WILSON,  
DAN SPERBER,  
Department of Linguistics, University College London,  
Gower Street, London WC1E 6BT.

## François Boucher

Sir, - Diderot's objection to Boucher, citing his private life as corroboration, dates from the Salon of 1765, and not 1763 as I erroneously stated in my review of the François Boucher exhibition in Paris (October 10).

ANITA BROOKNER,  
Courtauld Institute of Art, 20 Portman Square,  
London W1H 0BE.

In the shortlist for the TLS/Cheltenham Festival of Literature Poetry Competition which was published in the TLS of October 3, three of the poems were incorrectly attributed. No 3 is by Richard Kelly Tipping, No 4 by Daphne Leighton and No 5 by Aelmuire Cleary.

The 1986 John Florio Prize for the best translation of a work of contemporary Italian literature into English has been awarded to Avil Bardon for her translation of *The Wine-Dark Sea*, a collection of short stories by the Sicilian writer Leonardo Sciascia, published by Carcanet Press and reviewed in the TLS of December 20, 1985.

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## Sales of books

### H. R. Woudhuysen

Books from two interesting libraries begin Sotheby's next sale of topography, travel and natural history books and prints on October 23 and 24. The first sixteen lots come from Newstead Abbey and were collected by Byron's school friend Thomas Wildman, who bought Newstead in 1818. One of these lots contains an exceptionally rare Byron item: his *Letters written at Missolonghi January to April 1824*, to Mr. Samuel Barff at Zante, privately printed at Naples for the Barff family in 1824 and inscribed to the Duchess of St Albans, which, with Charles B. Taylor's *The Son and Heir* [privately printed?], 1832, is expected to fetch between £200 and £250. From a quite different sort of place, the French Jesuit Library, the Bibliothèque des Fontaines at Chantilly, a large collection of atlases is for sale. The star item among these is a magnificent copy of Blaeu's first atlas the *Atlantis Appendix*, Amsterdam 1630, with sixty hand-coloured double-page engraved maps. Only five other copies of this work are known to exist: none of them is as fine as this copy, which is estimated at £40,000-£50,000. Later in the sale there is an even more stunning copy of the French text edition of Blaeu's *Atlas Major, Le Grand Atlas*, Amsterdam 1667, in twelve volumes with over 600 hand-coloured maps and illustrated charts: this is expected to fetch £80,000-£100,000. The sale is particularly strong in northern European maps and travel books and has a long section of Greek topographical prints collected in the earlier part of this century by René Puaux.

Among the colour-plate books there is a set of David Roberts's *The Holy Land* expected to go for as much as £60,000. Manetti's *Ornithologia*, Florence 1767-76, full of lively birds "strutting, parading, posturing and occasionally flying over its 600 hand-coloured plates" (estimate £40,000-£50,000) and Redouté's *Choix des plus belles fleurs et des plus beaux fruits*, [1833], with 144 plates printed in colour and finished by hand, in the same price range.

The most curious item in the sale is probably Anthony Pearce Allan's five volumes of journals of his voyages between 1826 and 1846, written by hand and illustrated with his own

drawings and sketches, as well as newspaper cuttings, ephemera and letters. Allan was an Irishman who travelled around most of the world - to India, the Far East, Southern Africa, the West Indies and Australia - as a Midshipman and captain on various boats. His journals look as if they contain some gripping reading, including accounts "of the sufferings of the crew of the *brig Mary Russell* under their extraordinary Captain Stewart" and descriptions of Sydney and Hobart in the 1830s. Allan's coloured sketch of "The Midshipman's mess on board the Honble. Cos. Ship Marchioness of Ely" shows a very jolly scene of ship-board life in around 1826-9, with sailors smoking and drinking and playing chess, while one man writes up a log and another plays the flute, all overshadowed by a huge cannon at the back of the room: the journals are estimated at £5,000-£7,000.

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 299  
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than November 7. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date.  
Entries should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on November 14.

1 Herbert suddenly appeared in the mirror. G rehearsed what she would say about how she wanted her hair done, but he wasn't interested. Solemnly the maestro removed the grubby piece of black ribbon adorning her pony tail, and gravely unravelled the elastic band underneath. He held out his hand to the junior who stood at his side with a loaded tray. "Scalpel", thought G.

2 In the looking-glass at the hairdresser's, K glared at her face as if it were Edwin's. The bearded young man behind her, sensing restlessness, suggested a colour rinse. "Rinse" sounded more nonchalant than "dye".

3 There was a brief silence: Mrs Courcel did not look in the mirror at him to see what he thought of what she thought: she continued calmly to gaze at herself, picking at pieces of her hair with coral-painted nails, but G looked fleetingly at his own face as a tidal wave of rage and hatred surged up his body . . . and was astonished to see that it was suffused with a weak (and silly) smile.

Competition No 295

Winner: P. Carter

Answers:

1 The nothing of the day is a machine called the velocipede. It is a wheel-carriage to ride cock horse upon, sitting astride and pushing it along with the toes, a rudder wheel in hand - they will go seven miles an hour.

John Keats, Letter to George and Georgiana Keats, February 14-May 3, 1819.

2 Shall we ever, my staunch Myfanwy,  
Bicycle down in North Parade?  
Kant on the handle-bars, Marx in the saddlebag,  
Light my touch on your shoulder-blade.

John Betjeman, "Myfanwy at Oxford".

3 . . . every hundred yards or so I stopped to rest my legs, the good one as well as the bad, and not only my legs, not only my legs. I didn't properly speaking get down off the machine. I remained astride it, my feet on the ground, my arms on the handlebars, my head on my arms, and I waited until I felt better. But before I leave this earthly paradise, 'suspended between the mountains and the sea, sheltered from certain winds and exposed to all that Austerevents, in the way of scents and languages, on this accursed country, it would ill become me not to mention the awful cries of the corncreaks that rain in the corn, in the meadows, all the short summer night long, dioning their rattles.

Samuel Beckett, "Malin."

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## COMMENTARY

## That uncertain feeling

David Kelley

ALFRED DE MUSSET  
A Door Should be either Open or Shut  
Cottesloe Theatre

A Door Should be either Open or Shut appears to be a slight play. Its tone is the elegant badinage of which Noël Coward made fun earlier this century. It concerns a poor little rich girl and on if anything even richer man and there is the possibility of a happy ending since he, beguiled by her aggressively feminist attacks on his bored attempts at flirtation, is lured into a proposal of marriage which she, to his surprise, accepts with prompt enthusiasm.

A far cry, it might seem, from the *Lorenzaccio* which the National Theatre so brilliantly presented a few years ago. Is Musset mixing his wine with water, entering into complicity with established values? Perhaps. Or is it a positive resolution of the dilemma posed in *Il ne faut pas brâler avec l'amour*? That is: how is it possible to feel sincerely and authentically when the sophistication of modern manners and the complex uncertainty of modern values cannot but induce cynicism and mistrust of feeling? For this question, central to the Romantic dilemma, and perhaps our own, is what is under discussion in this light, witty and elegant *divertissement*.

The opening and shutting of the door, which provide the title of the play, and the simultaneous and contradictory movement between seduction and rejection that the two characters indulge in are a function of the Romantic "mal de siècle". According to the Comte, it is boredom (*ennui* in the French) which impels him to call on the Marquise. It is boredom with the discourse of seduction, uniquely centred on

physical attraction, which causes her to make a pretence of rejection, and the door to open and close with uncertainty throughout the play. In the event all seems to turn out well, and the ability to love is reawakened in the Marquise—as the huge painting glimpsed at the back of the set obliquely and ironically suggests. But how authentic is that love? Will it survive the social convention of marriage? The Marquise's eagerness to change the crest on her ring in the light of her promotion to the rank of Comtesse hardly bodes well for everlasting felicity.

At his best—in *Fantasio* for example—Musset manages to make of the ironic insubstantiality of the form of the play both a statement of its subject and a comment on its validity as a statement. A Door Should be either Open or Shut is not Musset at his very best. But it is not as slight as it might at first appear. The frivolity which characterizes its tone is itself a manifestation of the problem with which it deals.

The platform production at the Cottesloe is admirably stylish and unemphatic, in keeping with the tone of Musset's play. The translation, by Tania Croft-Murray and Karen Johnson communicates the wit of the original, and constantly calls it to mind. The Comte is perhaps older than one might have imagined him from Musset's text, but the energy of John Shrapnell's performance carries conviction. And Eleanor Bron, as the Marquise, acts out the combination of coquettishness and conventional prudery that the part demands, with acuity and charm. The set, by Julian McGowan, with the Central School of Art and Design, plays cleverly and delicately with period detail and significant perspectives—mirrors which reflect nothing, walls which open up to images reflecting the drama enacted on the stage. Tact, discernment, playfulness and sensitivity characterize this brief, but not negligible entertainment.

## The depths of austerity

Jonathon Brown

GEORGES BIZET  
Carmen  
Theatre Royal, Glasgow

The seventeenth-century Spanish drama of Calderón was important to Wagner for its depth of austerity and deliberation; and Bizet's Spanish melodrama was important to Nietzsche. Its depth ascribed to something like the opposite qualities. In this new production for Scottish Opera, Graham Vick presents the work firmly in the grim and nearly ritualistic manner of the old Spanish drama, and, helped by John Mauceri's detailed account of the score, and by a bare set (designed by Michael Yeargan) furnished only by dozens of chairs, or a few tables, or a wall that can be raised as a diagonal across the revolving section of the stage, this austerity is all but triumphantly realized. Much of the action takes place on the large rotating area of the empty stage, surrounded by simple wicker seats, suggesting not only the spectacular drama of the bullfight, but also the popular nature of the old national drama. Stark yet colourful, this is a view of the work so full of sharp divisions and contrast that it is Carmen's equivocal love that becomes the heart of the piece—and not her unequivocal sexiness.

This is as it should be. The temptation to give Carmen scarcely any stage presence other than the frankly sexual, diminishes the work, and generally reduces the acting to a sort of coy sex education. In this production however, the habanera is not the licentious half-invitation that it is in so many versions; instead, Jenny Miller gives it the character of a riddle, a non-sense except to the victims of its truth. She sings softly and sadly of love, not as something that she controls, or can wield over men, but as a fateful force that could as easily ensnare her too. With this wisdom, Carmen seems detached in so far as she seems certain of fate's hand; but equally she seems involved, ensnared indeed, certain that fate has chosen her to demonstrate

the riddle. Since Jenny Miller replaced Emily Golden at only twenty hours' notice (having been promoted from Mercedes in only her second performance for the company), some of the credit for this may be due to both conductor and director; none the less, to have realized in so subtle and so beguiling a fashion this vision not only of the character Carmen, but also of the ritualistic and terrible paradoxes of helpless human love, is a singular achievement.

In Carmen's other set-pieces in the first three acts, the seguidilla and the gypsy song, as well as in the substance of her taunts against Don José as he seeks to obey the bugle, her chief concern is not with love, let alone mere sex appeal, but with a way of life: a life of dancing and drinking and loving no doubt, but in particular, the gypsy life of freedom. These values are as if hemmed in between her initial riddle of love in the habanera, and the scarcely less riddle-like reading of the cards. Again, by a variety of imploring yet resigned expression, both in the voice (its softest register particularly potent) and in her acting, Jenny Miller makes these values seem like hope imprisoned by the ritualistic inevitability of love and death, and her account of the fourth act, the final reckoning of it all, brings together such a touching clash of hope against hope, and perplexed certainty, that when Don José plunges the dagger into her back and sends her body towards the edge of the stage, even in this familiar work it is a shocking and unexpected moment.

The new translation by Anthony Burgess is idiomatic enough, but while its informal and chatty manner may be modern, it sits awkwardly with the darkness of the drama that the production emphasizes. Little attempt is made to give the singers the extraordinary assonances of the original. As for the other singers, only Jane Leslie MacKenzie's strong Micaela matches this duty and bitter vision. The production can be seen in Glasgow on October 24 and 27, thereafter during November in Liverpool (4, 8), Edinburgh (11, 14), Aberdeen (19, 22) and Newcastle (25, 29).

## Writing it out

John W. Butt

RICHARD NELSON  
Principia Scriptoriae  
The Pit, Barbican

This play by Richard Nelson, presented by the RSC under the direction of David Jones, is a nerve-racking practical course in learning to write. An immature American on the gringo trail finds himself in the early 1970s sharing a prison cell with a similarly immature local in some unnamed fascist Spanish-American dictatorship. Both plan to be "writers"; neither has done any living. The American is preparing the standard first novel on his father and himself, Ernesto has collected a few clichés about prostitutes, mother and a charmed life at Cambridge. They are then put to the test: the torturers mutilate Bill's genitals and almost tear Ernesto's arm off, and both, particularly Bill, start to see that writing is more than the paper-and-ink counterpart of anti-Johnson marches or the self-indulgent elucubrations of a Latin mother's boy. There is a terrible image of Bill, trouserless and bloodstained, holding a fragment of paper in his shaking hands and reading a few luminous lines from an Old English poem which seem to pierce the darkness and transform their prison. At this dire moment they discover their only support is the love of one stranger for another and the timeless images of poets who knew nothing about "commitment" or movements. Writing will not come cheap.

This first part, the transformation by pain and despair of two boys and their idea of literature, has great power. Richard Nelson has a real understanding of American provincialism, the tedious, fuzzy enthusiasm of the radical who knows nothing about politics, people, ideologies or foreigners; and even imagines that Latin-American dictatorships have "jaws". Part Two shows the pair fifteen years later

obliged now to define their attitudes to left-wing repression. Ernesto is the servant of a typical Soviet-style dictatorship, and Bill is a member of a writers' and artists' committee arguing for the freedom of a poet who was once an ambassador for the old régime. The poignancy of this situation would have been increased if the victimized poet's crimes had been more terrible, but the alterations in the relationship of the two men come as something of a shock in view of the hard lesson they were taught in Part One: it rather effectively draws the line between political commitment and artistic responsibility, and shows only too well how loathing of injustice can sometimes often defeat itself by becoming blindly partisan. But we also see, in the sly and self-flattering "international artist", Hans Elnhorn, that the claims of writing also have their limits and that a couple of good novels do not automatically promote you to sole official spokesman for the conscience of mankind.

For all the emphasis on basic human emotions, this is a rather intellectual play and the actors have to work hard for their parts in the face of a lot of abstract dispute. Anton Lesser's all-American boy emerges as a complex and convincing character, but Ernesto remains elusive; one gets the feeling of a skilled actor (Sean Baker) occasionally thwarted by the writer's failure to get a real grip on Latin-American emotions and values—this despite the pains taken to get the accents and attitudes right. The ebullient gringo first dominates the relationship and the play and then is suddenly pushed out of focus in Part Two, which concentrates more on the general issue of intellectual freedom and moral responsibility. This theme is so immense and by now so burdened with accumulated arguments, that it could easily overload an intense study of a developing relationship. It is a tribute to the professionalism of the actors that the play is effectively kept.

## A question of images

David Nokes

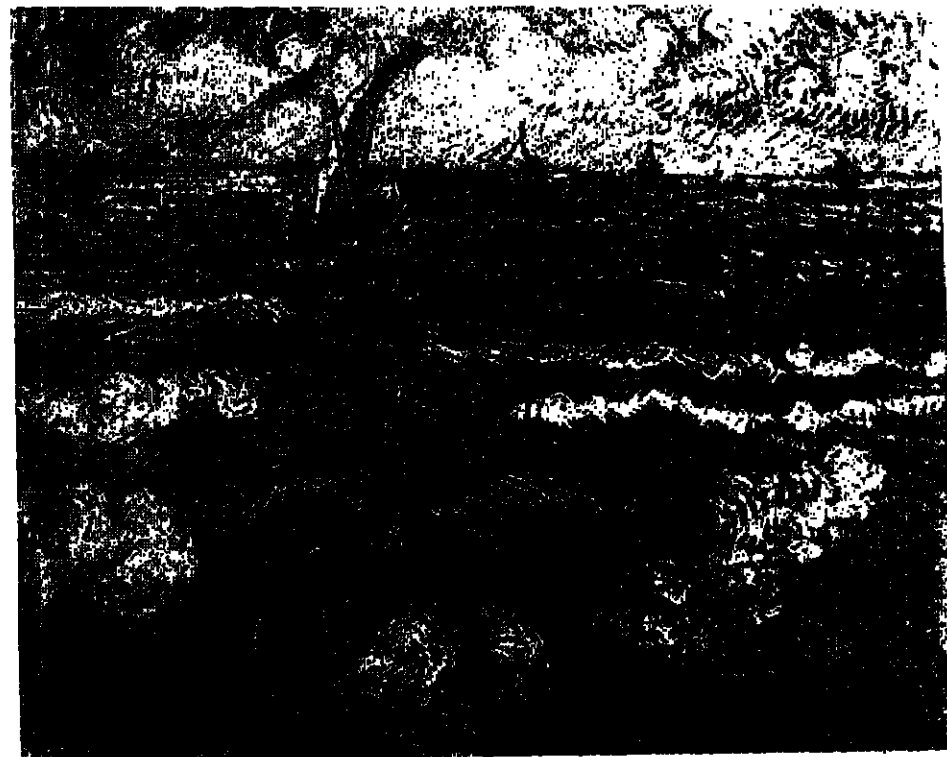
The Secret Life of Paintings  
BBC2

Though virtually extinct in our universities, driven out by the glacial onset of Jarrattization, that much-loved species, the eccentric pedagogue, continues to flourish on television. The latest in a line of descent which has brought us Magnus Pike, David Bellamy and Barbara Woodhouse is Pamela Tudor-Craig. Bellamy would erupt from some watery swamp, a Neptune in bathing trunks and goggles, to lead us on a Gulliverian investigation of the jungle wars in our own back-yard. Tudor-Craig, dressed in a chic neo-Renaissance outfit of mink and knee-breeches, materializes genie-like from a puff of smoke inside a sealed museum chamber to initiate us into the secret life of paintings. The chamber belongs not to any real museum, but to some cell-like aesthetic limbo, where paintings from the National Gallery and the Uffizi hang side by side, like captives on the wall.

All this preliminary make-believe indicates the main problem with a series which insists on bombarding us with one visual gimmick after another. We might at least have hoped for some stylistic consistency in the presentation. Tudor-Craig not only affects a mock-Tudor costume but also reads by candlelight, tells the time by an hour glass and keeps a skull among the dusty vellum volumes on her shelf. But this Disneyesque mode of Renaissance pastiche is violated by a series of video-tricks and computer graphics more appropriate to *Dr Who* or *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. The production cannot resist the temptation to offer us frame-by-frame illustrations of the narrative in the manner of a comic. The first programme dealt with Hieronymus Bosch's "Christ Crowned with Thorns". Tudor-Craig contrasted the apparent serenity of this painting with the seething nightmare vision presented in most of Bosch's work. It was, she said, "the stillness in the eye of the hurricane". Instantly, the camera zoomed in to give us a close-up of her eye (why not of a hurricane?) Mention of a prison sent the grille of a portcullis crashing down the screen. A reference to blood started a stain of red seeping across the painting. Apart from the irritation of such tickly devices, they have the effect of upstaging the paintings themselves, which are reduced to a backdrop for an ostentatious *pas de deux* between presenter and technician. At one point Tudor-Craig explained the incongruous spiked dog-collar worn by one of Christ's tormentors as a concealed pun. *Dominic cani*, the dog of the Lord, was a coded reference to the Dominicans who controlled many corrupt Vatican practices. But the light of this revelation was eclipsed by a punning production style which can turn the eye of a hurricane into an electronic blink.

All this is particularly disappointing since at the heart of each programme is a subtle, patient and illuminating iconographic essay. Tudor-Craig deciphers her chosen paintings with skill, confidently peeling off the levels of allusion. At one level, she argues, Bosch's painting offers a subversive political cartoon whose impact "must have been dynamite". Be that as it may, she reveals a map of the bodily humours, an astrological of the four elements and an allegory of salvation. Her second painting, Uccello's "St George and the Dragon", takes her far beyond the familiar legend into "the shadow-lands of subconscious images and symbols". It is the strangeness of Uccello's version of the story which intrigues her. Where is St George's Red Cross? Why is he so young? Why is the dragon so meek? What is that ominous spiral in the clouds? Behind the familiar patron of English chivalry she detects a number of pagan precursors: there is the Green Man of fertility cults; there is the Egyptian god Osiris who every morning slew the dragon which tried to swallow the sun; there is Christ Himself in the dragon mouth of Hell. Inevitably many of these interpretations must be open to question; the analysis of Bosch's tormented imagery is a particularly contentious

area. Yet Tudor-Craig betrays no hesitations about her conclusions. The confident tone of her detective work is reminiscent of the Edgar Lustgarten style of criminal reconstruction. Like Lustgarten, she offers us the forensic evidence, those tell-tale fingerprints or pigments which clinch the case. Yet for all her skill some clues still evade her. It is not until the very last moments of the last programme that she raises questions that may have been troubling viewers. Why does the man on the left have a cross-bow bolt through his hat (or head)? Unfortunately, she confesses, we may never know. Lustgarten would never have settled for that.



"The Sea at Salines-Marie", by an imitator of Van Gogh, from the exhibition, Don't trust the label.

## English eclectics

Andrew Saint

Charles Barry, Junior, and the Dulwich College Estate  
Dulwich Picture Gallery, until November 2

Charles Barry, junior, was the architect of Dulwich College and surveyor to the school's ample estate. So this exhibition, handsomely catalogued by an enthusiastic Dulwich College teacher, Jan Piggott, has special local reference. But is also helps to sort out the Barry clan and put its members in perspective.

Like tradesmen and professionals of all kinds, architects often come in family dynasties. Though this can confuse, it is helpful sometimes to look upon their work as a continuum, and so it is with the Barrys. The innovator who confounds Sir Charles Barry, the designer of the Houses of Parliament and the Reform Club, with his sons, E. M. Barry, of the Royal Opera House and Charing Cross Hotel or Charles Barry, junior, of Dulwich and the forecourt to Burlington House, does not go far wrong. All three were among the many nineteenth-century British eclectics who sought some kind of resolution to the conflict between Classic and Gothic architecture by grafting Gothic details on to Classic compositions. The Houses of Parliament exemplify this perfectly, as Pugin, called in by Sir Charles Barry to make its Gothic ornamentation convincing, was the first to apprehend.

Nowadays this indigenous type of architectural compromise sticks in few gullets. What many people still find hard to stomach is the bulbous, mansarded, Franco-Italian dress with which the younger Barrys and others began to bedeck their grander buildings in the 1860s and '70s. Yet in many ways the step was a logical one. France and North Italy had gone through the mill of stylistic assimilation in the sixteenth century; the eclectics were curious to see if the results could be tailored satisfactorily to Victorian architectural conditions.

To be a thoroughgoing eclectic, you must be a gifted architect. E. M. Barry has his moments: the Royal Opera House auditorium, for

## The reproductive urge

Sarah Walden

Don't trust the label  
Nottingham University Art Gallery

Uniquely among the arts, painting suffers from its intimate connections with money. Most of the elaborate deceptions on display in the Arts Council's touring exhibition, *Don't trust the label*, stem from this connection. One of the most flamboyant fakers, J. F. Joni, a late nineteenth-century mayor of Siena, represented here by a pleasant little fifteenth-cen-

tury triptych from the Courtauld Institute's collection of forgeries, publicly protested at the discovery of X-rays "just when Italy is in crying need of reconstituting her prosperity".

The industry is a venerable one: the mounters of scrolls in the Imperial Palace in Peking were under orders as early as the eleventh century to patinate the silk of copies so as to simulate age—though in China faking often has as much to do with tradition as with gain. Some of the European forgeries exhibited here are now of a respectable age too, and acquiring a patina of their own, on top of the tobacco water, turmeric and baked crakelure, or whatever resourceful technique their craftsman had invented. But most forgeries bear the indelible imprint of their own time, which comes sharply into focus with age too. Some of the faces in Van Meegeren's surrogate Vermeers bear undeniable similarities to Marlene Dietrich, which the art historians of the time, locked into their own time module, failed to spot. Van Meegeren was especially good at providing the experts with just the missing link in a painter's development that they were hoping to find, as with his Dirk van Baburen "Procureur" here, which was then a lost painting seen only in the background of two acknowledged Vermeers; or his "Last Supper" in Rotterdam, which supplied the long-sought evidence of an early Italian journey by the young Vermeer.

Whenever possible, the exhibition provides the original itself, so that our responses can be tuned against the perfect pitch of the artist's real work. By contrast with the copy, fake, reproduction, pastiche, adaptation, restoration or even the artist's own replica, certain constants emerge. The strangeness of the creative truth is replaced by the lighter orthodoxy of the copy. A mechanical semblance remains, but the meaning behind the brushwork, pencil or burin has drained away.

The sinuous line of a Picasso drawing is unconsciously regularized, emptying it of nervous energy and tension. The highlights on a horse supposedly sketched by Géricault are accentuated into anatomical absurdity. Lionel Constable's clouds have none of the meteorological validity behind his father's seemingly artless skies. In his anxiety to achieve the correct relief, Otto Wacker, the painter of Van Gogh's "The Sea at Salines-Marie" was known to have constructed some pictures entirely in white impasto before adding colour, producing a scarcely surprising lifelessness. The almost expressionistic loose scrape of the burin in the second state of Rembrandt's "Hundred Guilder Print" is gradually tidied up into a crisp, bright, twentieth-century photo-mechanical reproduction.

The exhibition raises many questions beyond the entertaining theme of forgery. At what moment does an adulterated or over-restored painting cease to justify the name on the label? And what are we to judge by? If harshly cleaned or otherwise degenerated Titians are used as a guide to his art, the basis of judgment itself is eroded. Sickert was struck by Degas's fear of future dishonest or incompetent restoration of his work; he had seen examples of the distortion of Manet's pictures after his death. It was to safeguard the meaning of their art that Claude compiled his *Liber Veritatis*, and Turner engraved his work.

No such concerns are likely to inhibit Andy Warhol, whose "Marilyn Monroe" is exhibited together with a fake. Market forces are gathering speed: only three years divide the genuine from the pirate versions. Whether any aesthetic or philosophical distinctions can be made in duplicate art is one of those questions which leave one incurious about the answer.

But who knows? While urging the audience to resist the sedation of their critical faculties by the atmosphere of the gallery—the reverent silence, the guards, the frames, the labels—maybe the organizers are playing a double deception on them? Maybe both Warhols are genuine, or neither. For the laboriously ironic send-up to be laboriously sent up would be a double dose of derision.

The exhibition will be at Nottingham until October 25, at York City Art Gallery from November 1 to December 7 and at Exeter Royal Albert Memorial Museum from December 20.

## Short Story Competition

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Closing date  
31st March  
1987



# Face to face with the past

Arthur C. Danto

EDGAR WIND  
Hume and the Heroic Portrait: Studies in  
eighteenth-century imagery  
Edited by Jaymie Anderson  
139pp plus black-and-white photographs.  
Oxford University Press. £29.50.  
0198173717  
The Eloquence of Symbols  
Edited by Jaymie Anderson  
172pp. Oxford University Press. £27.50.  
0198173415

In an early essay on Plato's philosophy of art (1932), included in the first of these volumes of his selected papers, Edgar Wind made the exact observation that Plato's condemnation of art does not specifically depend upon, nor is it especially vulnerable through, the theory of Forms with which it is associated. For much the same attitude – that art is dangerous and that members of a good society must be insulated from its baleful influences – is assumed in the *Laws*, where none of the metaphysical apparatus of the Forms is unlimbered.

What somehow escaped Wind was the possibility that that metaphysics was a consequence of Plato's attitude towards art rather than an explanation of it, and that the theory of Forms was a powerfully disabling theory, designed to inflict a double degradation on art, which Plato feared for other reasons. It is as though Plato imagined a universe in which art could be ontologically segregated, as but the appearance of appearance, twice removed from the domain of philosophical cognition, which is uniquely of what is real. Should this analysis be true, then the entirety of Western metaphysics, if indeed so many footnotes to Plato, was generated by an enmity towards art that at the same time acknowledges the power of an enemy it pretends is ephemeral.

Had something like this occurred to Wind, he might have extended this deconstructionist attitude towards the other philosophies of art he battled against, in *Ari and Anarchy*, of course, but also in his 1930 address "Warburg's Concept of *Kulturwissenschaft* and its Meaning for Aesthetics": namely the formalism of a previous generation of art historians, Heinrich Wölfflin and Alois Riegl, and the connoisseurship of Giovanni Morelli and those who followed him in practising it – Bernard Berenson, for example, and Max Friedländer. For the effort to reduce art to its formal identity, or to disregard, as Morelli did, the powerful images of adorations, transfigurations, and crucifixions, in favour of such trivial marks of artistic identification as the treatment of fingernails and earlobes, might then have been perceived as disfranchising strategies in their own right – modes of putting art at a safe distance. And so, had he lived to witness it, he might have perceived the contemporary view that an artwork is a permanent possibility of interpretation – as Mill had insisted a physical object is nothing but a permanent possibility of sensation – as a way of not having to deal with what makes art threatening and its experience important.

In any case, the view that art really can be dangerously transformative, and the view that any approach to art is to be suspected which, for whatever dark reasons of its adherents, seeks to find a way of handling art without one's having to expose oneself to those dangers, were the two poles of Wind's philosophy of art. At no point, so far as I know, did he connect them theoretically; but they are clearly connected in his work as an art historian and his energies as a polemicist. His art-historical work, at its frequent best, consists of removing, as a great restorer removes the grime of centuries to expose the original brilliant palette of a painting, the layers of historical change that separate us from the work's original powers. His effort is to discover, and to equip us with the information we need – the lost theories, the forgotten codes, the submerged intentions and faded symbolic vocabularies – to respond to the work as it was meant to be responded to, and as presumably it was responded to by those for whom it was alive.

His researches into the philosophical armatures of Raphael's "School of Athens", or the programme of meanings in Beethoven's "Feast of the Gods" – or the lesser exercises in historical

restitution included among the essays in *The Eloquence of Symbols* – respond to what he described once as "the perpetual need to recover lost modes of perception". He did not believe that a thing of beauty is a joy forever, for the contingent knowledge required in order to resonate to its beauty may have decayed. He did not believe, with Croce, that the contingencies wither away, leaving the forms immortally luminous, for it is not difficult to imagine, he argues, information which, if erased, would carry the work into incoherence: the *Divine Comedy* would not survive ignorance about angels, or the *Iliad* ignorance of gods. A great deal of knowledge must be captured by the pedestrian procedures of historical learning if a work whose "matter has fallen into oblivion" is to recover its aesthetic bloom. A deeper thesis than this is entailed by his characteristic investigation, namely that form and matter are not so utterly distinct that the form might remain, as the soul was once thought to survive the decay of the body, when the matter of content has fallen away.



Sir Joshua Reynolds's portrait of Dr James Beattie, entitled "The Triumph of Truth"; the picture is reproduced from Reynolds, edited by Nicholas Penny. The exhibition, to which this is the catalogue, was reviewed in the TLS on January 21 of this year.

So Wind polemicalizes fiercely, not only against a formalist aesthetic such as that of Clive Bell, for whom "the representative element in a work of art is always irrelevant", but against the art historians who sought an autonomy for their discipline by reducing works of art to their formal essence and seeking, as it were, laws of formal transformation as if the subject were analogous to crystallography: "A cathedral surveyed by Wölfflin's eyes is no longer a cathedral at all, but a crystalline system of visual forms." And he took acerbic delight in showing how Wölfflin's formalist premises tricked his eye, which "seized on a subordinate clause as principle". That was through not knowing the iconographic programme of "The School of Athens", but the point is altogether general: "It commonly happens that critics who pride themselves on their purely formal approach to Hogarth fail to see where the chief accents fall in his pictures." And though the restriction of works of art to occasions for aesthetic pleasure is itself a disfranchising posture – "Aesthetic delectation is the danger to be avoided", Duchamp once said – Wind demonstrates, over and over, that a non-cognitive pleasure is as inaccessible as a form purged of meaning. Wind is always wrestling with aestheticians and theoreticians who have, in his view, like Duchamp's *celibataires*, stripped the bride of art bare, through interminable grinding, not only of her vestments but of her flesh.

Nowhere did he succeed with greater effect than in his remarkable collection of essays on eighteenth-century painting, primarily British and primarily portraiture. The authority of the historical analyses is so compelling as to mute the familiar polemic, which comes through mainly in asides to the reader. Discussing the decorative programme of the King's Staircase at Hampton Court by Antonio Verrio, he

observes, deliciously, "The inclusion in this programme of so sensational a character as Julian the Apostate suggests that Verrio may have regarded his subject as something more than an excuse for using ultramarine." Julian, indeed, was accepted (we learn) as early as William III, as "a symbol of toleration and freedom". He was a natural exemplar from ancient times of the enlightened sovereign, even if this reputation did not survive Gibbon's characterization of the Apostate, which makes his presence in art something of a puzzle to us who do not know of his eclipse in eighteenth-century consciousness or his reason for being there to begin with. Solution of the iconographic puzzle does not redeem the painting – it remains spectacularly mediocre – but it illustrates an episode in the history of patronage, namely through identifying Shaftesbury's view that the artist ought to be "the mechanical executant of the ideas dictated to him by a philosopher". Shaftesbury's argument is analysed in another essay ("Shaftesbury as Patron of Art"), but the essay on Verrio is not simply an

isolated exercise of iconographic ingenuity and supererogatory erudition: it illuminates the general theme of the essays, which concerns the relationship between art and philosophy in the English Enlightenment, which Wind especially develops, with marvellous sweep and fascinating detail, in the title essay, "Hume and the Heroic Portrait", in which a cat's cradle of connections is drawn between Hume, Beattie, Gainsborough and Reynolds. The essay is built around a kind of proportion: Hume is to Beattie as Gainsborough is to Reynolds. It is of course a flawed proportion, Hume was a much more considerable philosopher in comparison with Beattie than Gainsborough was an artist in comparison with Reynolds. It is not clear, for that matter, that Reynolds is in any sense Gainsborough's inferior, save perhaps with respect to our reluctant interest in the theories and attitudes he elaborated in his *Discourses* to the Royal Academy and sought to fulfil in his own work as a painter. How alien Reynolds is to our sensibilities may be marked by the fact that such terms as "eclectic" and "artificial" were terms of praise in Reynolds's critical vocabulary. As these terms have no application to Gainsborough, he is bound to be appreciated as the more sympathetic painter to our eyes.

Nor does the proportion quite hold up as a causal picture, representing Hume as an influence on Gainsborough: as Beattie was on Reynolds. It is unclear that Gainsborough was even a reader, let alone a disciple of Hume, as Reynolds may be argued to have been of Beattie, by the evidence of the almost comically heroized portrait, "Doctor Beattie, or The Triumph of Truth". The thinker fingers a volume called "Truth" while Truth herself, by force of her radiance, vanquishes some dark meanies whom Reynolds's contemporaries were eager to identify as Voltaire, Gibbon and

Hume. If the fat meanie were indeed Hume, Wind would have established one of the internal connections his thesis, in at least its strongest form, would require; but Reynolds only allowed that it was broad enough to be Hume. What is certain is that Hume, as moralist and historian, was dubious about heroes, and that when he chose his own portraitist – who showed him plainly, ham-faced and clear-eyed, wearing the uniform of the Embassy Secretary (or a scholar's turban in another life) – he turned to his friend, Allan Ramsay.

There is, then, no direct connection between Gainsborough and Hume, only the speculation that he chose to have himself portrayed as Gainsborough would have portrayed him. At best there is evidence that the philosopher and the painter exemplified an attitude antithetical to that of Beattie and Reynolds. None the less, one finishes the essay with the sense of having three-month tour of Palestine and Syria in the summer of 1909 which took him – alone, for most of the time – to three-quarters of the fifty or so sites fortified by the Crusaders during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. A minor epic of student fieldwork, it involved trekking on foot in the hottest season for about 1,100 miles over the rough crags where the seigneurs of Outremer and the military orders had built their strongholds. Half a century after their original publication, both thesis and letters have been reproduced in a handsome and very reasonably priced single volume by Michael Haag, who contributes an introduction.

This is not the "monumental book on the crusades" that Lawrence often talked about but never found time to write. Early in 1911 he began work under Hogarth, and later Wootley, excavating and publishing the Hittite mound of Carchemish on the Syrian/Turkish border. Then came the war, intelligence work in the Middle East, the revolt in the desert, fame, disillusionment and retreat into the ranks of the peacetime army and RAF. Other literary endeavours intervened. Yet shortly after Lawrence took his degree, the top copy of the thesis was returned to him, for the sake of the photographs, sketches and plans needed for what he then evidently hoped would lead to publication. Haag's edition reproduces the manuscript notes that Lawrence penned in the margins at this time; some of them indicating passages demanding further work, or better evidence; others demonstrating that curious mixture of self-deprecation, uncertainty, puerile humour and flashes of intolerance that so complicated his character.

Although much better than most later critics have allowed, the thesis is fundamentally an old-fashioned polemical work, dedicated to the revision (rather, demolition) of Sir Charles Oman's statement that the "Western builders were for many years timid copyists of the crusading architects". Lawrence's detailed knowledge of early Western European military architecture, plus a gut feeling that the liberators of the Holy Places did not learn everything they knew about fortification on their way to the East, spelled Oman's doom. Guillaume Rey, the leading French authority on the fortifications of the crusading military orders, fared little better: Rey's Syrian field-work was faulted remorselessly and, besides, "he does not know French architecture". No generosity here for pioneers. Later generations of scholars returned the compliment. Thus Fedden on Lawrence: "stimulating but often inaccurate"; and Boase: "a provocative study, which owes much of its interest to the personality of the author". The fact is, of course, that with very few primary documents, and by Byzantine, Crusader and Arab works shaping many of the same sites, and no firm consensus even on the introduction of such important dating features as the stone *machicolis* (the corbelled-out drop-box or fighting-gallery that at about this time replaced the battlements and hide "hoardings" running around the tops of earlier works), it is still fiendishly difficult to determine the sources and chronology of medieval fortification. The sustained building programme and frequent military campaigns of the Crusaders (particularly the Templars and the Hospitallers, with their vast resources and continuity of experience) provided what must have been a uniquely fruitful period of development for military architecture, as lessons were learned by both

There is an interesting study to be written on the relationship between the great art historians and philosophy. Sometimes this has taken the form of discipleship, as with Gombrich and Popper, or with Panofsky and Cassirer. Gombrich's "making and matching" seems to me structured on Popper's philosophy of science, as Panofsky's theory of perspective is an application of Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms. Wind was almost unique in his speciality as one who really thought like a philosopher. This may not be perceived as a supreme compliment, but it certainly made him sensitive to interchanges between philosophy and art in the eighteenth century that would have remained hidden without him, to the detriment of the art and to the deep impoverishment of our experience of it.

*Giotto and the Orators: Humanist observation in painting in Italy and the discovery of perspective composition* (1971) by Michael Baxandall has recently been reissued (1985) by Oxford University Press. Paperback, £9.95. 019 8173873

## Western promise

Simon Pepper

T.E. LAWRENCE  
Crusader Castles  
224pp. Haag; distributed by Biblos. £14.95.  
0902743 538

T.E. Lawrence died in 1935. Among the mass of Lawrenceana that appeared in 1936 were the two slim volumes of *Crusader Castles*, published under his own name in a limited edition of 1,000. Volume One was Lawrence's Oxford BA thesis of 1910, "The influence of the Crusades on European military architecture". Volume Two consisted of a selection of letters written to his mother from 1905 to 1909 when, as a schoolboy and then an undergraduate, he travelled widely through Britain and France visiting medieval churches and castles. These wanderings culminated in the adventurous three-month tour of Palestine and Syria in the summer of 1909 which took him – alone, for most of the time – to three-quarters of the fifty or so sites fortified by the Crusaders during the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. A minor epic of student fieldwork, it involved trekking on foot in the hottest season for about 1,100 miles over the rough crags where the seigneurs of Outremer and the military orders had built their strongholds. Half a century after their original publication, both thesis and letters have been reproduced in a handsome and very reasonably priced single volume by Michael Haag, who contributes an introduction.

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*The Dome: A study in the history of ideas* by E. Baldwin Smith, first published in 1950 (six years before the author's death), has been reissued in the Princeton Monographs in Art and Archaeology series (164pp, with 228 line illustrations. Guildford: Princeton University Press. Paperback, £8.50. 0 691 00304 1). Following a discussion of domical origins and of the use of the wooden dome in the Near East and the masonry dome and mortuary tradition in Syria and Palestine, Professor Smith suggests the various symbolic values attached to domical forms in Indian, Islamic and particularly Byzantine tradition, with special significance being placed on martyrdom in the evolution of church architecture. Literary sources, the evidence of coins, and religious beliefs are drawn upon to support the theory.

## FICTION

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## Shudder reader

Lindsay Duguid

BERYL BAINBRIDGE  
*Filthy Lucre*, or *The Tragedy of Andrew Ledwhistle and Richard Slewaway*  
 149pp. Duckworth. £8.95.  
 07156 21246

*Filthy Lucre*, written in 1946 when the author was thirteen, comes quite late in Beryl Bainbridge's juvenile literary career: after early stories of an old sea-dog named Cherry Blossom Bill, a fictionalized in-depth account of her parents' marriage and a three-year D. H. Lawrence period. It was written, Bainbridge tells us in her disarmingly detached introduction, as a distraction from the bickering of her mother and father, there being no television in those days. It is dedicated to the author of *Dismal England*.

Clearly a book that demanded to be written, *Filthy Lucre* displays few compositional uncertainties, few of those enemies of promise with which adult authors have to contend. The plot – a complicated saga, stretched over several generations, involving inheritance, impersonation, revenge, shipwreck, drunkenness and many deaths – has, one feels, hardly been a bother at all. What Bainbridge is really interested in is style, and it is here that she really lets herself go. The book bursts with dramatic touches and with the recklessly abundant voca-

bulary of early adolescence: "a wharf where the slimy Thames moves like some loathsome adder"; "Tis très sad, he murmured"; "a frail, voluptuous, senile old hag of nearly 86". A lot has obviously gone into the names: Ernest Ledwhistle, Gaspar Liverwick, Martin Andromikky, Rupert Bigarstaff.

The influence of Dickens is everywhere apparent – in the broad canvas, the large cast of characters (the Ledwhistle family tree which the author kindly provides contains sixteen members, some neatly characterized as "A spinster", "A drunkard", "A girl" and "No one important") and, above all, the frontal address to the reader: "Shudder reader for it is none other than..."; "God is not mocked"; and at one stage, "Read more slowly". But the exotic settings, which include a tropical island where oil is discovered and a Virginian plantation echoing to snatches of Negro spirituals, recall Defoe and Stevenson. The piling on of dramatic pressure and the technical virtuosity that Bainbridge shows in her use of flashbacks are alarmingly confident, and it is somewhat reassuring to find that she thinks a mongoose is a large bird.

The whole has an appealing naivety which her publishers have done their best to preserve. Now that Beryl Bainbridge has grown up, her best friend's husband has produced the book for her, artfully reproducing the family tree, correcting the spelling and even having her own detailed and striking illustrations redrawn.

## Yearnings for infidelity

Toby Fitton

JOHN MOLE  
*The Monogamist*  
 233pp. Century. £9.95.  
 07126 95028

John Mole has repeated the success he had last year with the well-paced farce *Sail or Return*, but it is the reputation rather than the success that is disconcerting. Marital discord among the rising middle classes is a rich but not inexhaustible vein, and many of the same features – domestic bickering, drunken mishaps and rookery-nookery of a traditional kind – are deployed again. The reader starting with this second novel will not be troubled by the similarities, and can enjoy a frothy romp.

Alex(andra) and Tony, as comfortably un-

tidy in their marriage as in their domestic surroundings, begin to feel that after ten years they ought to be bored with each other. Upwardly mobile from a base of small newsagents' shops, they find themselves as token monogamists on the fringe of a suburban wife-swapping circle, and yearnings towards infidelity are encouraged. Alex takes a book-keeping course and fails, unavailingly, for the gay Marxist lecturer; Tony lays false scents inferring a phantom adultery. Separate fantasies become interlocking delusions, causing both parties a good deal of ingeniously-managed anguish before all is happily sorted out.

Mole experiments this time with random chatter shown antipodally in double columns, and with undifferentiated passages of imagined action followed by the more sober reality. Discretion is usually shown to be the better part of valour in these robust intramarital exchanges, but the formula is too frequently repeated for

separate shower. He reminded her of the BUPA membership, the index-linked pension, the shares and dividends". Lively's achievement in these stories is that, rather than providing a John Braine-like catalogue, such comforts add to a sense of the characters' unease. Perhaps the most effective of the new stories is "The French Exchange". Ostensibly an account of a family outing for a picnic with all the trimmings near an "old camp", the story is a relentless exposure of jocular ignorance, proceeding stage by stage with each innocent question from a visiting French boy – "I am interest in astronomy, philosophy and the music of Mozart". A similar weariness with culture, not to mention dodgy sanitation, informs "A Long Night at Abu Simbel", in which a "Maglours" party, abandoned by its courier, endures a

Fit

Probably merely twinge of dyspepsia,  
 nothing at all, just tremulous tightness to  
 left of the sternum, absolutely  
 peak of condition and body tip-top.

stick to the Perrier more in the future, high fibre diet  
 jogging, longevity, yes, jogging, longevity, yes.

PETER READING

## Ordinary anguish

Jo-Ann Goodwin

TIM PARKS  
*Loving Roger*  
 151pp. Heinemann. £9.95.  
 0434577367

Anna is a typist at TT, remarkable only for her ordinariness. She lives with her parents, who remain deep in mourning for her brother, Brian, killed in a car crash years ago. Anna's feelings are important to no one but herself. She remains cramped into a tiny box room, Brian's spacious bedroom next door maintained by her parents as a shrine. Her boyfriend, Malcolm, whom she has been seeing since the third year at school, digs up worms from her parents' garden to use for fish bait; and constantly but unenthusiastically suggests that they should marry.

In the midst of this mediocrity and boredom, Roger Cruikshank arrives to work as a type-setting executive at TT. Tall, blond, middle-class and egotistical, he seems to Anna to have stepped from the pages of the romantic novels she constantly reads. The relationship they embark on is conducted in terms of deepest secrecy. Only Neville, Roger's closest friend and a Cambridge academic, is allowed to know of their mutual involvement. When Anna becomes pregnant, Neville is the only outsider to know the identity of the baby's father.

As the novel proceeds, the pressures engen-

dered by the relationship become increasingly hard to control. Roger goes to America on behalf of TT and is, predictably, unfaithful. Anna, left alone to endure her pregnancy and the birth of the child, examines her commitment to Roger and begins to understand the dangerous nature of her feelings. We realize that her self-assertion will be violent, bloody and irresistible.

In *Loving Roger* Tim Parks exhibits an astonishing control over the tone of his writing, and it is this discipline which makes the novel such an impressive achievement. Roger is a nightmare of self-regard, his attraction to Anna partly physical, but largely based on his desire to "write". He regards her as an excellent source of material – she recounts the office gossip, which he intends to use in a play, with an honesty and perception that Roger finds fetching and surprising.

The bulk of the novel is written in the first person, and it is the voice of Anna we hear explaining her obsession, describing the humiliation and anger she feels with the same honesty which so amazes Roger. Anna is a triumph: her experience points to the truth that none of us is ordinary. Even those who read *The Far Pavilions* are also capable of anguish. Those who ignore this do so, as in Roger's case, at their peril.

It is Roger, for all his pretensions to artistic status, for all the hours spent at the typewriter composing his poetry and plays, who is ultimately mundane. The excerpts from his diaries are characterized by an entirely adolescent desire for self-dramatization. Therein lies the core of the problem; Anna is an adult, and Roger simply refuses to accept life on adult terms, insisting on remaining a sort of *enfant terrible*, living by a set of rules formulated at school and university: all of which will lead, inevitably, to the violent denouement of the novel.

Isabel Scholes

PAT BARKER  
*The Century's Daughter*  
 248pp. Virago. £9.95 (paperback, £3.50).  
 086068646X

Lisa Jarrett, born on the stroke of midnight, 1900, is the sole tenant of a row of houses due for demolition. Half blind, her shawl stained with parrot-droppings (the work of Nelson, rescued from a pub in 1967), she finds a sympathetic audience in Stephen, her social worker.

He, however, has his own troubles – which, though incidental to the plot, are essential to the continuation of the novel beyond its opening characters. Otherwise, naive though he is, Stephen could hardly fail to spot in Lisa the early signs of the unstoppable bore. Recounting dreams ("I dreamt about a seal the other night") or declaring that "being good in bed [holds] a marriage together", she gives the lie to the novel's assumption that to be old (and more particularly to be "Northern") inevitably confers wisdom.

Larger issues – the purpose of social work, the disintegration of working-class culture – are touched on only to be trivialized, though they reveal all the more with each other as neighbours, and leave one eager for Penelope Lively's new novel, announced for next spring: its subject is tank-warfare.

## Old, not wise

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## Ghosts in the light of day

Mark Casserley

RONALD FRAME  
*A Long Weekend With Marcel Proust: Seven Short Stories and a Novel*  
 196pp. Bodley Head. £9.95.  
 0270310152

The subtitle of this collection is a reminder that the publication of short novels has been problematical since Henry James's day. The solution here is to make Ronald Frame's *Prelude and Fugue* into a Triton among minnows; but the stories are not simply make-weights, for they are related thematically to the novel, and, in a sense, prepare the way for it. Frame's characters attempt to come to terms with the past, to discover the truth about it, or to conceal it from themselves; but nothing will enable them to escape from it. They are aware, in the present, of the passage of time and the process of ageing, and their contact with one another is renewed – especially in marriage and within the family – by unease and dislocation. Like much modern English fiction, these stories exemplify an ethic of disenchantment, and an aesthetic of limitations. Frame's prose is austere, careful and clear. A tone of voice that is at times remorselessly insisted on

## The chic of a chiselled *chéri*

Lesley Chamberlain

RUDOLF NASSAUER  
*Kramer's Goats*  
 178pp. Peter Owen. £10.50.  
 0720606594

Fabrice is a mad, inspirational poet whose life is recorded in five "notebooks" of sensational prose he hands to his twin brother as the ambulance men arrive; but his inner life and the writings so lack depth, one is tempted to say that Rudolf Nassauer's sixth novel resembles not madness or even relative sanity, but rather a world unto itself which does not invite readership, the "you know's" and "as you can imagine's" notwithstanding. Even given that Fabrice is Jungian analysis, sentences such as "In short, her fear of dropping you expressed by her tight hold entered you" (conveying of course the analyst's verdict on the poet's mother) and "she chiselled me with her wilfulness to make an image of me which had to

## Among the soiled creatures

Philip Smelt

DENNIS POTTER  
*Ticket to Ride*  
 202pp. Faber. £9.95.  
 019114523X

Dennis Potter is famous for his television plays such as *Pennies from Heaven* and *Blue Remembered Hills*; but he is less well known as a novelist. His latest work of fiction, *Ticket to Ride*, is a confusing psychological thriller about John, an art director who has been sacked from a London advertising agency. The novel opens with John losing his memory while he is on a train journey to London. Having no ticket and no means of identification, just a pocketful of money and a suspicion that he has committed some crime, John books into a Paddington hotel.

From there on, the novel lurches into a sequence of flashbacks: John's former life in the country and his unhappy childhood, punctuated by powerful descriptive passages set in London, and the strange goings-on of his wife, who is portrayed as a fallen woman. When he was sacked from the agency, John began drawing wild flowers in painstaking detail. This obsession is traced back to his tyrannical and methodically oppressive father, who forced John to study and memorize all the native plants of the woodlands around their vicarage home. But John's attempt at a new career also fails when his publisher rejects the drawings. John's amnesia may be the result of problems with his work, although there is a suggestion

serves to heighten and individualize a vision that Frame embeds in a series of portentous epigraphs (from Akhmatova, Carlos Fuentes, Virginia Woolf): literary grid-references, perhaps.

In "The Lunch Table", two old friends meet regularly, and behind the women's pleasurable dwelling on their youth in the 1960s lie unsatisfactory marriages and the prospect of middle age. The story seems at first to have nothing to it, but one finishes it with a different opinion, though irritated, perhaps, by the unsparing omniscience of Frame's bird's-eye narratorial viewpoint. Other stories show him trying to avoid this; in "The Camelhair Jacket", the incident that disturbs a husband and wife is recounted by each of them independently to a third party, who then informs the narrator, but is unable to give any idea of the final outcome. First-person narration superimposes the narrator's character, and especially the narrator's relationship with the past, on Frame's exposition of the situation. The title story is an example of this, as is "The Blue Jug", which gives a convincing richness to an old woman's memories of her life with a great artist, and its reflection in his paintings; here, satisfaction lies in the power of objects, not in the relationships of people. "Merlewood" is perhaps the most impressive example of this style; the narrator

content with my reality and the discontent of her creative ability, poor cow" (ditto the patient's) do not win confidence.

Fabrice by his own account appears in Austria, Earl's Court, South Africa and Paris, mainly with Annie, a cute French girl who pouts, calls him *chéri*, reveres his work and is great in bed except when she is learning to drive. He may or may not commit arson and murder. Like his creator, this Viennese-born poet writes, sometimes works in the wine trade, and fled from the Nazis around 1939. His life, conscious and unconscious, is compounded of the brutal and the chic, regularly washed down with lots of "delicious coffee", though now and again he bankers after lost poverty and squalor. To the brutal/brutish side, beginning with the cow who bore him, belong the "pure (sic) Aryan" goats of the novel's title, and the persecution of the Jews. But these two worst experiences, whether lived or dreamt, take other forms. The mother is a spider at the centre of her web, an umbrella

that his memory loss is a reaction to some unspeakable (and effectively unspoken) act of violence. The only certain thing is that Potter avoids any kind of clarity.

What results is an impressionistic collection of disjointed episodes, all beautifully described but studiously and disappointingly vague. The author obviously dislikes what he sees as the dissipation of London life – the litter of fast-food hamburgers, the "sardonic . . . working-class males" and the jaded prostitutes – all part of "A scum left by the receding bilge". But the countryside retreat of the amnesiac anti-hero is also the scene of desperate unhappiness. John's wife, Helen, whom he first met in a London hotel in some fold of his tortured memory, wanders from crisis to crisis, identi-

WILLIAM MARSHALL  
*Head First*  
 186pp. Secker and Warburg. £9.50.  
 0436273292

Another of William Marshall's stories of everyday life at the Yellowthread Street police station in Hong Kong. Auden, disguised as a Sikh postman, is delivering letters and waiting for someone to blow him up. O'Yee is swapping quotes from Thoreau on the telephone with a mysterious unknown woman, and Peiffer is trying to find out who is digging up and dismembering the corpses of people who have been buried in Hong Kong. In a word, the usual wholly original and addictive blend of frenetic activity, anthropology, cunning plot, broad farce and tragedy.

muses on a photograph of his family, taken during a boyhood holiday at their house in the Western Isles. His unease and distress lead to the conclusion that his father's supposedly accidental death was suicide, and that he had already made his decision when the photograph was taken. Reminders of *To the Light-house* (there is a tall rock out in the bay, off which the narrator's father probably threw himself) are present, but ironically so.

The narrative of *Prelude and Fugue* is divided among several "voices", so that Helen Wilmot's memories of childhood, of the sinister Nanny Hine, and of a relationship with her father that reeks of undeclared incestuous desires, coexist with her baffling and frightening life in wartime London, after his death in an air-raid. But there is also the experience of the fire itself, and a narrative that seems to come from outside her. It seems that she is engaged in flight, in a search, and in a struggle to maintain her identity. Her attempt to resist the idea that she is already dead, and the growing feeling that she is living in a country of the dead, are a powerful testimony to Frame's psychological depth, his awareness of interpersonal tensions, and the special dimension of the continued everyday existence within which his protagonist strives to remain – a sense of ghosts existing in the light of common day.

fetishist and the lover of Josef Mengele; the prize Nazi goats, shot to avenge the sins at Belsen, are scapegoats of consciousness. It is a pity that these pictures don't add intensity and energy to the narrative, and even more regrettable that the sex, even when Mann opens her legs to the doctor, is reckonable as chic.

The point of framing this "journal" with a brief fraternal introduction seems to be to remind us how hard it is to distinguish fact from fiction, especially in disturbed minds, and the message is reinforced by the suggestion that the identical but oppositely endowed brother (sane, undersexed, self-deprecating) is only an *alter ego*. This is a therapeutic intention for the serious novel to assume. But Nassauer's piece of gratuitous non-storytelling dives for deep meaning with too light a head, floats on the dreams, wallows in the muddy waters, and all that without providing entertainment. The very slight historical content needn't have been given in the author's native German, which tempted someone to misspell *Kristallnacht*.

fied, enigmatically, with the London whores, with their "heavy eyelids and a crimson gash of a mouth", who form the multitude of "soiled creatures passing up and down the street". Bemused by the emotional waywardness of her husband, and frightened by his sudden changes of mood, Helen takes comfort in the dark possibilities presented by a kitchen knife.

There is no resolution of any of these anxieties. By the end of the novel, John's memory may or may not have returned; and Helen may be the victim, or the perpetrator, of a chilling crime. This is a depressing novel, but the psychological thrill is watered down by its mannered style and complex structure, which promise an exciting journey but never seem to get us very far.

M.R.D. MEEK  
*In Remembrance of Rose*  
 202pp. Collins. £7.95.  
 0002314339

Lennox Kemp, now back in practice as a solicitor and running the partnership's branch office in Newtown, draws up Rose Amnory's will. A week later she is dead; killed, it's presumed, by the burglar who broke into her house. When Kemp investigates further he's warned off, both violently and by the authorities. Excellent scene-setting, solid and varied characters, convincing dialogue, and impressively portrayed evil. But the whole somewhat deflated by an intrigue which effectively exists at one remove from the action.

T. J. Blayton

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# Learning to survive

Michael Kazin

ALEXANDER KEYSAR  
*Out of Work: The first century of unemployment in Massachusetts*  
469pp. Cambridge University Press. £45 (paperback, £12.50).  
0521230160

Unemployment is one of the most persistent ills of capitalist society, but we know little about its past. As with other neglected historical subjects, the reason must be sought mainly in the realm of cultural prejudice. Throughout the nineteenth century, elite and middle-class opinion in both Britain and the United States held that jobless workers were merely idlers who lacked the energy and determination to find and retain employment. "If it rained twenty-dollar gold pieces until noon every day, at night there would be some men haggling for their suppers," said the California railroad magnate and politician Leland Stanford, voicing a sentiment with which, at the time, only charity volunteers and labour activists publicly disagreed. A century later, some men of influence still echo Stanford's view. President Reagan, for example, has referred to the pages of "wim" advertisements in daily papers as evidence that joblessness is an individual failing.

The unusually long Depression of the 1930s did provoke American social scientists to chart and explain unemployment. It also moved the job-holding but insecure majority to adopt a more understanding attitude. But the few historians who took up the subject focused on such topics as the origins of social insurance and the intellectual discovery of the business cycle. They wrote, in other words, about the "problem" of unemployment, not about unemployed people themselves.

Alexander Keyssar's book breaks this unjustifiable silence. The product of over a decade's research about Massachusetts, the first American state to measure joblessness (beginning in the 1870s), it contains the fullest quantitative analysis so far carried out of the subject, a nuanced description of how the unemployed survived before the onset of state-funded relief, a broad narrative of unemployment politics up to the 1930s, and a provocative argument about the limits of twentieth-century re-

forms that aim to "manage" rather than eliminate the problem.

Unemployment did not exist in the contemporary meaning of the term until wage labour became the dominant economic system in the Western world. America's industrial revolution began about 1800 in the textile mills of Massachusetts, but the state's population of small farmers and self-employed artisans continued to alternate between manufacturing and crop-raising during the era of the Civil War. "Men and women who had more than one occupation," notes Keyssar, "were . . . poor candidates for idleness." However, worn-out land and the promise of steady mill work impelled both native-born and immigrant to take a variety of permanent jobs, and this also made them perpetual candidates for joblessness.

Keyssar, in an expert display of computer-aided history, shows that, from 1870 to 1920, unemployment in the heavily industrialized state was a pervasive phenomenon, experienced by workers in all trades and at every level of skill. During years of prosperity, the annual jobless rate hovered close to 10 per cent, but the frequency of unemployment (workers without a job for a stretch of weeks or months) averaged three times higher. When depressions struck – as they did once each decade – every second working-class Massachusettsan could expect to miss several pay envelopes during the year. Surprisingly, women workers and the state's small black population were out of work less often than white men. The domestic, service, and clerical jobs that they held were steadier – if usually lower-paying – than seasonal occupations like bricklaying and stevedoring which custom, at least in New England, reserved for male Caucasians.

Keyssar, through anecdotes and second-hand reports, shows us the many ways in which the unemployed coped with their condition. Thousands took to the road as temporary or permanent "tramps", most did "odd jobs" from shovelling snow to modelling for art classes, all gave up buying new clothes and meat; all relied on ethnic, neighbourhood, and family ties which of necessity were strengthened by a chronically unstable economy. Keyssar does discover, in the records of the state medical examiner, a few terse descriptions of suicides: "Out of work and despondent for a long while.

Body found floating in the Charles." But the main image conveyed is that of people who learned how to survive unemployment precisely because it was such a common if painful aspect of their lives.

When he turns to political history, Keyssar demonstrates that institutional responses to a major "social problem" always reflect differences between the aspirants to and the holders of power. Trade unions, which never represented a majority of the labour force, acted defensively. Seeking steady work for their members, they tried to limit the number of apprentices, keep women at home, convince employers to lay off younger workers first, and urged the government to create jobs. At the same time, reformist legislators and intellectuals like John R. Commons and, in England, Beveridge had developed a new analysis of unemployment which blamed an inefficient "system" rather than its victims. "Reasonable security of employment . . . is the mother of industrial morale", counselled one reformer. "Joblessness is next to godlessness." But businessmen rejected voluntary social insurance plans as too costly, and it took a depression lengthy enough to be labelled "great" to convert well-meaning liberal sympathies into law.

Keyssar qualifies his conclusions with the

## Roots and branches

Ian Duffield

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183pp. University Press of Kentucky. £17.95.  
0813115418

The rediscovery and analysis of slave narratives, and the writing of black family history, now constitute a major area of scholarly and literary activity in the United States, and both *To Tell a Free Story* and *The Seed of Sally Good'n* make their own distinctive contributions to the field.

On the face of things, William Andrews's book is the weightier in more than length. His theoretical approach is that of semiology, sociolinguistics and allied trades, which will alert readers to expect some pretty rebarbative prose. He is confidently combative. John W. Blassingame, although patted on the head for his "excellent compilation", *Slave Testimony*, is taken to task for his belief that the integrity of white editors is any guarantee that they did not alter their author's texts. Andrews points out that these editors controlled the interpretation, emphasis, order and selection of what appeared in print, and he evidently feels that Blassingame is naive. Indeed, at the core of Andrews's work is a convincingly presented struggle between white editors (with the resources of the anti-slavery movement behind them) and black authors who found their narratives tailored and programmed.

Those whose works most offended propriety, as understood by whites, and dared to change the nature of slave narrative discourse, are extolled. This leads to the revision of some reputations. Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) is no longer seen as unreliable; Frederick Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855) no longer regarded as a padded rehash of his *Narrative* (1845). Since the lives and writings of blacks in Britain partly paralleled and certainly interlarded with those of blacks in the United States during Andrews's period, it is a pity that he observes his own North American limits so strictly. His main transatlantic interest is in the reception of Douglass, William Wells Brown and suchlike in the drawing-rooms and on the public platforms of the great and the good in Victorian Britain.

Andrews does address the writings of James Gronniosaw and Ottobah Equiano, two essentially Afro-British authors, and recognizes

inevitable exceptions and he points out how changes in the language used about the unemployed also indicate a transformation of attitudes. His only error comes toward the end when he leaps past his evidence to argue that the reforms of the 1930s – unemployment insurance and seniority systems guaranteed by union contract – have changed only the types of workers most likely to be laid off (especially blacks) and "did not terminate or diminish the reliance of American capitalism upon a reserve army of labour".

Unthinking bromides about "progress" aside, it is a historic advance that reducing unemployment has become a responsibility of the state. Jobless men and women now have a thin but reliable cushion on which to fall; demands for more government-funded employment are politically legitimate even though difficult to win, in the face of huge budget deficits. Moreover, the same unions that defend seniority rules also advocate economic planning to guarantee full employment. Making joblessness more egalitarian would help nobody.

Despite his radical cynicism about the present, Keyssar's volume is a scholarly *tour de force*. Future historians will not be able to study the subject of labour without taking into account that part of the work force which could not find work to do.

Equiano's exceptional independence among early slave narrators. However, on Equiano is not at his best. Equiano was not the son of an Ibo man but of a man with a title. Among Ibos, titles strictly reflected achieved, not ascribed status, and were not hereditary. Andrews seems unaware of the arguments of Paul Edwards and G. I. Jones about interpolation and ghosting in Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* (1789). It is true that Equiano skillfully juxtaposes the virtues of Ibo simplicity with the vices of a materially and technically more advanced white civilization, but to what extent is this really an "Ibo perspective"? Such a contrast would have been meaningless within Ibo society, one of the least urbanized settled societies in West Africa. Equiano's effect relies on astute application of Western ideas in a way subversive of Western notions of superiority.

Ruth Polk Patterson has written a thoughtful and moving history of her own family from its origins in the family that Taylor Polk (of the famous white family that produced President Polk) sired on an Afro-Indian slave woman on the Arkansas frontier in the 1830s. It is a courageous book, in that it never flinches from facing the painful contradictions that this inheritance inflicted on her grandfather, Spencer Polk, and his heirs. It is unusual for its genre in that it utilizes an archaeological survey of the Spencer Polk homestead at Muddy Park to recreate and evoke the life of the Polk family until poverty and racism drove them all away during her own childhood in the 1930s.

Not that the family had always lived in poverty. Spencer amassed over 500 acres in land, to secure the ample sustenance of his extended family and the respect of his neighbours, black and white. But this was a precarious security. Two of his sons, Charles and Jimmy, were victims of white homicidal violence after treading across the lines drawn by the dominant society. His daughters, superficially had it easier; brought up to be ladylike and acceptable (unlike their brothers) at the social functions of white neighbours, they grew up to be deeply unhappy women. One, Frances, was prevented from marrying the son of blacker neighbours, the Bullocks, and lived thereafter in unhappy spinsterhood. In the next generation, Dr Patterson's rather salubrious father, Arthur, struggled against hard times and harder hearts to maintain the extended family on its homestead. His resident steps gave the cold shoulder to his dark-complected wife, a Bullock. The nadir came with family dispersal and ruin of the homestead in the 1930s. Tough and resourceful as ever, the following generations have a proud record of achievement in education, the professions, business, the armed forces and entrepreneurship. Their family history, past and present, is a salutary corrective of stereotyped images of a black life.

## Making of a martyr

Christopher Brooke

FRANK BARLOW  
*Thomas Becket*  
334pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £14.95.  
0297789082

A generation ago most professional historians assumed that historical biography was a feature of Victorian culture which would only survive in popular esteem. History was an analytic subject; intellectual history was respectable, social history the rage; narrative was dead. The tide of fashion has changed, and Frank Barlow has long been one of the most distinguished exponents of new-style biography, and narrative history, among our senior medievalists. His *Edward the Confessor* (1970) and *William Rufus* (1983) are classics of biography in this sense: they are essentially detailed studies of political history, shot through with precise and intelligent summaries of the wider context of their heroes, from time to time lit up by vivid touches of insight and humour.

The quality of the sources, and the drama of his death and afterlife, have made Thomas Becket the ideal subject of medieval biography. A dozen or so contemporaries attempted the task; and the archbishop himself inspired before his death an enterprise which led to the survival of many hundreds of letters written in the heat of the crisis of his pontificate, between 1162 and 1170. The years of exile and his death are uniquely well documented for their age, and much deep research has gone into their study. Yet there has been no detailed biography since 1859 – though Raymonde Foreville's *L'Eglise et la royauté* (1943) goes very closely over much of the ground – and most of the short biographies are of little worth. Professor Barlow sets W. H. Hutton's (1910) above the rest; my own preference is for David Knowles (1970). But Knowles himself thought, as most of us have, that much more intensive study and re-editing of the letters were needed before a large-scale biography should be attempted; and although some of the letters have been re-edited, including those of Arnulf of Lisieux (by Barlow himself), Gilbert Foliot, John of Salisbury and Alan of Tewkesbury – and Anne Duggan has published a study of *Thomas Becket: A textual history of his letters* (1980) to which Barlow rightly pays homage – her edition of the rest of the corpus is still under way.

But Barlow's *Thomas Becket* is a triumphant success in spite of us all. The whole story is here; the first steps of the ambitious young Londoner who found patronage in the talented circle of Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury; his rise in the mid-1150s to be archdeacon of Canterbury and chancellor to the young King Henry II; his promotion by the king's patronage to the throne of Canterbury and the rapid change which led to confrontation with Henry and six years of exile; the patched-up reconciliation, with the murder in the cathedral by a group of royal barons following hard on its heels; and the amazing sequel, in which friends and foes came to compete in doing him honour and raising the new cathedral choir, which is still radiant with much of its original glass, as a monument to the "blissful martyr". Those of us who have spent long years struggling with the material and its problems will find holes to pick. But Barlow makes systematic use of all the known evidence and very nearly all the modern studies – even the most recent books and articles; he appraises it all in his own independent way, allows a cool judgment and an admiration of the main protagonists well this side of idolatry, to play upon them; and the result is a detailed life of Becket which shows all the learning, shrewdness, and the occasional flashes of wit, that we expect of him.

I enter some minor caveats. The first is against the publishers. This book is so good a subject, and so well written that it should command attention from intelligent readers over many years; but it is also a goldmine for the expert, and he has been ill served. The footnotes are not only at the back, they are as numerous as one can well make them – my first task in reading the book was to note the pages to which they refer, which could easily have been provided in running heads. As costs rise and academic publishing is in crisis in the 1970s many of us accepted end-notes as the lesser evil than their total suppression. Now

the cost of printing is going down; there is no longer any adequate excuse for end-notes in books of this character, and the inconvenience is excruciating. The publishers have served author and public well in allowing numerous illustrations – most of them brilliantly chosen, one conjectures, by a happy collaboration between author and publishers. But one hopes that in a future edition plate 23 will really show us the marvellous portal at Vézelay with the tympanum of the Pentecost – through which Becket walked on the feast of the Pentecost in 1166 to utter his thunders against his enemies in the English court – and not what appears to be a museum replica.

The author takes us, lucidly and effectively, through every phase of Becket's life; the detail is so compelling, the care so great, as to compensate for a certain coolness in his tone. He writes well, sometimes eloquently, but carefully eschews the jewelled prose and psychological insights of Knowles. His approach is not unimaginative, yet he fails to give the reader the impact of some of the best of the sources, especially of the letters. When Becket was royal chancellor, and his old master, Archbishop Theobald, approaching his end, John of Salisbury wrote a series of letters to sound out if it was possible for Thomas to visit the archbishop on his deathbed. They are written with the subtlety of Jane Austen, and expose to us the predicament of a man under double patronage – client, servant both of king and archbishop – as no other documents of the age reveal them. Barlow refers to them but he neither quotes nor interprets their message; his account of Thomas's position in these years is full of shrewd touches, but the exceptional impact of the most revealing of contemporary sources is missed. There is indeed no appraisal of the letters as sources, nor of the development of modern scholarship on the crisis – though many a note generously acknowledges the work that has been done on this or that person or problem or document.

I suspect that the truth is that twelfth-century Latin letters have a rhetoric alien to Barlow's purpose. His purpose is to tell an unvarnished version of a story so interesting, so remarkable, and so dramatic, that the contemporary oratory may hinder us from the plain facts of the case. Eliot in *Murder in the Cathedral* deliberately softened the historical drama so as to lay emphasis on the inner substance of the story. In a similar way Barlow plays the symphony quietly so that the roll of the tympani, the frequent thunder, shall not deafen our ears to the human events he describes. For the reader who perseveres, as for the scholar, this enhances the value of the book; and the final chapter, "From death unto life", succeeds triumphantly. The muddle and confusion which followed the murder, the anxieties and hesitations, the anger and sorrow, the misunderstandings and contradictions of which human affairs are full, appear here in a most convincing form. Some will think him a little kind to the king: he does not quote the lukewarm phrase attributed to Henry by the eyewitness of the king's oath to the papal legates in 1172, that when he heard the news of the murder, Henry was "more grieved than glad" – a very likely reaction, for Henry must immediately have realized that, though he was probably innocent of the intention to murder, his wild anger against Becket made him responsible; but he must have been enormously relieved. The plain matter-of-fact approach of the whole work is very telling when it describes the numerous cures, the throngs of pilgrims, the rapid canonization. An attentive reader will find food for thought in many passages of this distinguished book.

The October issue of *History Today* includes an article by Norman Housley of the University of Leicester on the murder of Count Charles of Flanders ("Charles the Good") by his own vassals in 1127. Housley bases his account on a detailed narrative written by a twelfth-century notary, Gilbert of Bruges, "which has been neglected in Britain despite a very fine translation". The same issue of the monthly magazine contains two articles on the Scandinavian impact on England between the ninth and eleventh centuries. *History Today* may be ordered from 83-84 Berwick Street, London W1V 3PJ; individual issues cost £1.40.

In the current issue of the quarterly which, according to Ian Hamilton in the *Times Literary Supplement*, "has a liveliness and variety unmatched by any comparable publication in the United States."

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## Falling short

Cyril Mango

A. P. KAZHDAN and ANN WHARTON EPSTEIN  
*Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*  
287pp. University of California Press. £29.75.  
0520051297

Until fairly recently it used to be held that the Byzantine Empire, even if it had not been in a state of chronic decline since its very inception, was certainly decaying in the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The date often advanced for the commencement of this process was 1025, when the warrior emperor Basil II died; whereas Arnold Toynbee, in his chaotic book on Constantine Porphyrogenitus (1973), argued that things started going downhill as early as 963. So firm was the belief in "decline" that the only question at issue was how to explain it. Was it due to the incompetence of emperors and their ministers? To the disintegration of the peasant army and the growth of feudalism (or, at any rate, something like it) or, conversely, to the victory of the "bureaucratic party" at court over the brave defenders of the frontiers? Was it because of the cession of blanket commercial privileges to the Venetians? Or was it simply a case of exhaustion – a cause historians invoke when they can think of no other?

Thanks to the endeavours of many scholars, among whom I should mention A. P. Kazhdan himself as well as the Paris team led by Paul Lemerle, the picture has greatly changed. No one, of course, will deny that Byzantine Asia Minor collapsed like a house of cards after the battle of Manzikert (1071) and that Byzantine south Italy was lost at the same time. Yet, in spite of these and other military reverses, the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Byzantium are now seen as a time of increased economic activity, social change, a relaxation of government controls, intense architectural and artistic endeavour, an intellectual transformation affecting literature, scholarship, philosophy and law, even an upsurge in heresy. Our changed perception of the period deserved to be expounded to the general public, and who better qualified than Alexander Kazhdan to do so?

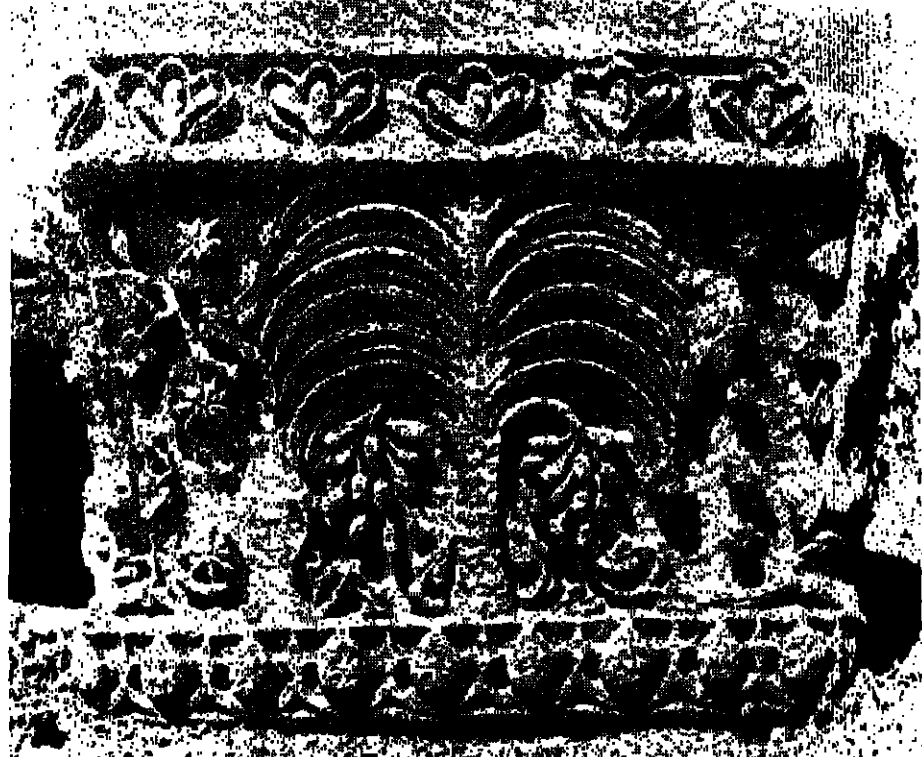
*Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, the product of a collaboration between Kazhdan and the younger art historian Ann Wharton Epstein, who has contributed many interesting insights, ranges over a wide assortment of cultural manifestations set within a social context. The context in question is seen as being defined by a process of decentralization (meaning the growth of provincial towns so as to counterbalance the

dominance of the capital) and, at the same time, of "feudalization" (in inverted commas). As to cultural consequences, they include the antithetical trends towards both popularization (as in the rise of vernacular literature) and aristocratization (as reflected, for example, in the epic of *Digenes Akrites*), the emergence of a class of professional intellectuals, an assimilation of the classical tradition in literature and art, a measure of criticism of imperial authority, a more open attitude towards alien cultures and a general shift from the impersonal to the personal. An anthology of selected passages from contemporary sources closes the book.

Apart from an occasional tendency to establish connections between phenomena which may appear unrelated to other observers (what, for example, does the rise of the vernacular have to do with the proliferation of small icons in steatite?), I would agree with most of what the authors have to say. If I may be allowed a criticism, it has to do not so much with the views they express and the facts that they marshal as with the method of presentation. In spite of the snappy American style the book is hard to read. Too much has been crammed into it, as if the authors were determined to empty all their card-files into the text. While they are prodigal with footnotes, they are short on explanation and reflection.

Yet the subject demands some attempt at explanation, no matter how tentative. Granted that Byzantine society was changing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and indeed changing in the same direction as that of Western Europe, why is it that by comparison with the West it fell so far behind both economically and culturally? Why did Byzantine provincial towns never develop beyond a fairly modest level of artisanal activity? Why was international trade left to foreigners? Why is there no Byzantine Abelard, no Byzantine Chrétien de Troyes or Nicholas of Verdun? Why is the Greek vernacular poetry that emerges in the twelfth century so dull, so devoid of literary merit? Why did the Byzantines, in spite of closer contact with aliens, manifest so little curiosity in the affairs and achievements of their neighbours? It is precisely in the period covered by this book that the gap between East and West, barely perceptible as it was in about the year 1000 (if anything, Byzantium was then in the stronger position), begins to widen until it becomes unbridgeable. Byzantium may not have been in decline, but it was not advancing fast enough and soon found its progress blocked.

Professors Kazhdan and Epstein have given us an abundance of raw material needed to construct an explanation of these phenomena, but the explanation itself still eludes us.



Part of a capital from the church of St Polyeuktos, Constantinople; reproduced from Cyril Mango's *Byzantine Architecture* 215pp. Faber/Electa. £12.95. 0571 145140.

## Black Sea power

James Howard-Johnston

ANTHONY BRYER and DAVID WINFIELD  
*The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos*  
Volumes One and Two  
394pp and plates. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks. \$80.  
088402 122 X

The Pontos was the backwoods of Asia Minor in antiquity. Its narrow, discontinuous coastal strip, behind which towered formidable, heavily forested mountains, looked out over an often sunless sea. It was an alien rain-soaked world, with luxuriant vegetation, where Greek colonization was limited to the odd impoverished outpost. Even the Romans, for all their determination to impose a high standard of order on intractable highlands and to establish cities as standard-bearers of culture, only completed the process of pacification in the sixth century. They probably never succeeded in endowing even Trebizond itself with such basic civic amenities as a theatre or a gymnasium. After remaining on the margin of history through the Dark Age, the Pontos began to come into its own from the late ninth century

when its economy was jolted into life by the flourishing towns of the Arabs' northern colonial world (Armenia, Caucasian Albania and Azerbaijan), which was itself in turn integrated into the vast transcontinental market of the Caliphate. Trebizond developed into the chief entrepôt linking Byzantium and the Black Sea to these markets, contributing something of its own to international exchange, its natural cash crop of fruit and nuts (mainly nuts). Three centuries later, its population, enlarged by an influx of refugees, the Pontians, began its career as a pocket empire (its capital, Trebizond, never numbered much more than 4,000 inhabitants), and put up an extraordinarily obstinate resistance to encroachment by Turkomans – a resistance only broken in 1461 when Sultan Mehmed II himself attacked Trebizond with a vast army, said to number 140,000 men.

Anthony Bryer and David Winfield have tramped or ridden up almost every river and rivulet valley among the Pontic mountains. Without neglecting the sights and sounds of modern Turkey (which they convey to their readers in occasional asides), they have observed attentively the landscape and such traces as survive of man's past presence, from the minute but well-crafted sixth-century church at Leri to unremarkable lumps of mortared rubble on the sites of late medieval castles. By their exertions over some twenty years, from the late 1950s, they have succeeded in overcoming two particularly frustrating obstacles to systematic survey work – the absence of accessible air photographs and the destructive power of Pontic vegetation (hence there is no physical trace of the Roman road system, which might have provided a fixed framework for the study of Roman and Byzantine settlement patterns). In *The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos* Bryer and Winfield have succeeded in writing an extraordinarily wide-ranging, detailed and solidly founded historical geography which focuses on the heyday of the Pontos from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. A multitude of sites and monuments (314 in all) are meticulously described and placed in their local settings. An immensely variegated set of historical episodes are given life by the infectious enthusiasm of the authors.

The material is well set out in twenty-eight sections, each dealing with a geographically distinct area. The coverage is at its most detailed for Trebizond and its immediate hinterland, but it reaches out east as far as the modern Soviet frontier, south to include the Lycian and Akampsis valleys, and far to the west (the Sinope). Two introductory chapters present an overall view of Pontic geography, including an exhaustive survey of routes taken by previous travellers (to which the name R. Hamlyn is added, to demote foreign pedants). The whole forms an indispensable work of reference

## Chattel-owning chattels

Pierre Briant

MUHAMMAD A. DANDAMAEV  
*Slavery in Babylonia from Nabopolassar to Alexander the Great (626–331 ac)*  
Revised edition  
Translated by Victoria A. Powell  
Edited by Marvin A. Powell and David B. Welsberg  
236pp. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press. \$55.  
087380 1048

The publication in English of Muhammad A. Dandamaev's book *Slavery in Babylonia from Nabopolassar to Alexander the Great (626–331 ac)* – first published in Moscow in 1974 – is a major event in the study of the socio-economic structures of the kingdoms of the Middle East in the first millennium ac. Until now we have lacked a large-scale, detailed study of Babylonian slavery. The author has made use of thousands of tablets in Akkadian which are quoted in full, translated and commented upon. The period under consideration covers the history of the Neo-Babylonian empire (626–538) and that of the Achaemenid (Old Persian) one (c 550–c 330). Within this time-span the documentation is very uneven; certain reigns, such as those of Nabonidus, Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius I (546–486) and Artaxerxes I and Darius II (464–405), are represented by an abundance of texts, but this is not the case for the reigns of Xerxes (486–465) or the later Achaemenid rulers of the fourth century ac. The documents come primarily from the archives of large temples (Babylon, Uruk, Sippar) and private persons, above all the Egibi family and the house of Murashu; it is the latter which provides the wealth of documentation for Artaxerxes I and Darius II's reigns. To round off his study, Dandamaev also makes use of the Elamite archives from Persepolis (in modern Persia) which date from the period 509–458, some of the letters of the satrap of Egypt to his estate manager there, and a few of the papyri from the Jewish garrison at Elephantine; both of the latter groups of texts dating to the late fifth century bc. There is also a detailed etymological analysis of the terms used to designate types of slaves and dependants, although Dandamaev is careful to emphasize the limited usefulness of such an approach for the historian.

As a result of this study, the addition of a further 100 texts in transliteration and the extensive indexes of texts cited and translated, Assyriologists will find their field of study greatly enhanced. (The general index, unfortunately, is not quite up to the same standard.) But the book is directed not only towards orientalist; it is also intended for all those interested in the structure and dynamics of economic and social formations in antiquity. Despite Dandamaev's marked reticence with regard to theoretical debate, he in fact discusses with great lucidity the fundamental problem of whether the Babylonia of that time was a slave society. He refers several times to the theoretical controversy surrounding this question in the Soviet Union, and has no hesitation in rejecting some of the positions held there.

In order to handle such a mass of documentary material, Dandamaev has chosen an analytical approach whereby he considers, in turn, slaves in the private economy, temple slaves, and royal slaves. But, as he stresses in the introduction, an analysis of the role and position of slaves cannot be separated from a study of other forms of labour. Thus a further section is devoted to the various categories of dependent peoples. The differences between categories of slave were real ones and particularly marked in relation to the manner in which slaves were acquired. As long as the predominant way of acquiring and accumulating human chattels continued to be children born to slaves, the temple authorities were particularly favourably placed; as they had at their disposal not only prisoners of war and debt-slaves, but also the slaves of private persons who had been dedicated to the temple by their owners.

Yet, despite these differences, one is more impressed by the characteristics common to all categories of slave. What is particularly remarkable is that a large number of slaves owned property, which Dandamaev describes as their *peculium*. They could lend, borrow,

buy (including other slaves) and engage in business transactions. Some of them were thus able to acquire a prominent position in economic life. In other spheres of activity, too, slaves were able to play a role comparable to that of free men: they could act as witnesses in contracts and give evidence in legal cases – including against free men. Dandamaev, however, rightly questions the concept of social mobility for slaves, as it was extremely difficult for them to acquire the status of free men. Enfranchisement is rarely attested and the *peculium* of private slaves was, in reality, the property of their owners. The economic independence enjoyed by slaves had no perceptible effect on their overall dependence. The only reason why their owners encouraged them to engage in the acquisition of property was that it was ultimately highly profitable for the owners, not the slaves.



A bronze zoomorphic figure, of the eighth to sixth centuries BC, discovered in the Grotto della Guerra, Lumignano, and now in the Museo di Palazzo Chiericati at Vicenza; reproduced from the catalogue of a recent exhibition, Museo ritrovato: Restauri, acquisizioni, donazioni 1984–1986 (215pp, with 12 colour and 230 black-and-white illustrations. Milan: Electa. 88 435 2023 7).

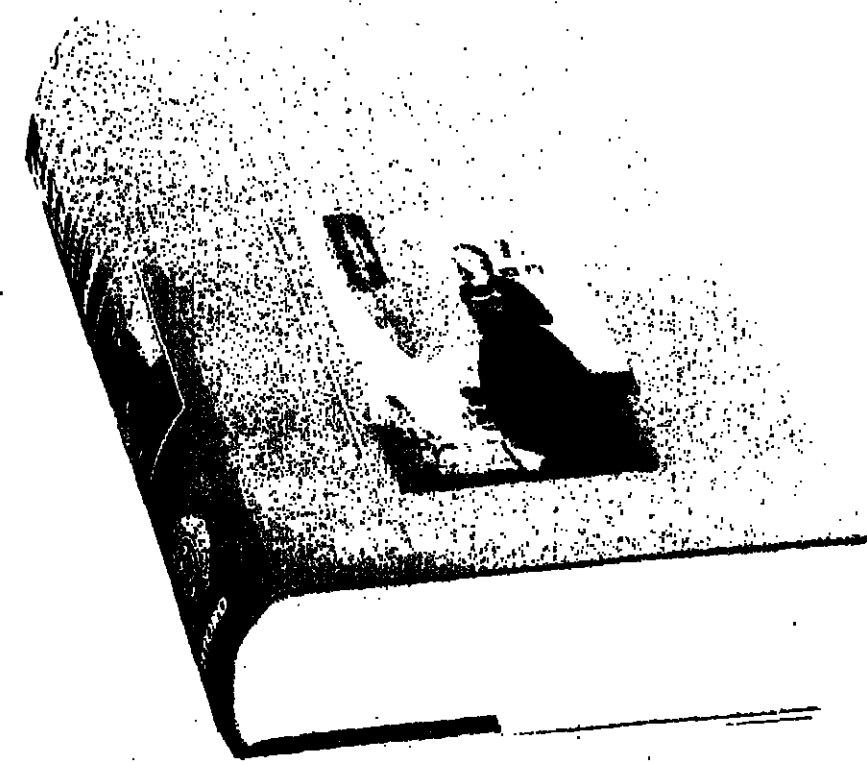
Dandamaev's conclusions concerning the place of slaves in the process of production are no less plain. Their role in agricultural and craft production, whether they were private or temple slaves, was considerably less important than that of free labour, except in cases where slaves were themselves the tenants of land-parcels. The reason for this was the relatively low productivity of servile labour, as slaves had to be superintended and had no interest in increasing production. Nor did they acquire any technical expertise. Owners of land and slaves thus preferred to make use of free, waged labour and encouraged the *peculium* system. The greater proportion of manpower for agriculture was drawn from dependent peasants who were hired together with the land they cultivated and paid a share of their harvest to the owner or leaseholder.

Dandamaev concludes that in this respect it is not possible to call Babylonia a slave society. This interpretation, with its solid textual foundation, raises questions concerning the status and position of those whom he calls royal slaves. Among them he includes the *kurtash* of Persepolis, who, according to him, were mainly prisoners of war settled on the estates of the king, members of the royal family and the nobility. If this is true, one would have to assume a major change from the situation prevailing in the Neo-Babylonian period and see the royal economy, as a result of the formation of the Achaemenid state, occupying a much more important place, in which slave labour played a dominant role. For this reason, one might question the notion that the period from the seventh to the fourth century constitutes a meaningful unit in the history of slavery. It is, of course, true that the example of Persia is only treated by Dandamaev in order to elucidate the Babylonian situation, but with the creation of the Achaemenid empire, can one really discuss Babylonia in isolation? Is it not essential to include it in a global perspective which would necessitate a re-examination of that highly controversial problem, "the Asiatic mode of production"?

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## Conservators of the image

Judith Herrin

ROBIN CORMACK  
*Writing in Gold: Byzantine society and its icons*  
270pp. George Philip. £14.95.  
054001085 5

Robin Cormack's *Writing in Gold* is an ambitious book which sets out to discuss Byzantine icons in their social context, in such a way as to sustain the interest of "the general reader". That task is always a difficult one, and it is increased, in this instance, because of the need to provide background information on six centuries of Byzantine history, and because the book comprises detailed analysis of six entirely separate case-studies.

To assist the general reader, a clear map, plans, 100 black-and-white photographs, a brief glossary and bibliography are included. But for a coherent account of the fundamental elements of Byzantine society, there are only the first few pages of Chapter One and a series of long, sometimes polemical parentheses, which tend to disrupt the narrative. Since there are no footnotes, this explicit criticism of modern scholarship is puzzling. On page 184, for instance, an unidentified quotation appears (the persistent reader will find the author, Romilly Jenkins, cited in the bibliography) on

page 111, Stephen Gero is taken to task, though nowhere named, and on page 217, Alexander Kazhdan (though his works do appear in the bibliography). Cormack succeeds in his main endeavour, however, of elucidating Byzantine art and culture through the confrontation of painted image and written word. Although this method is not quite as new as he claims, it provides some remarkable insights, in a fascinating interplay of art history and social history. The central chapters, on Iconoclasm and its aftermath, identify a crucial turning-point, which had lasting consequences for the entire Orthodox world. Since Iconoclasm involved the destruction of religious art of a figural kind (very clearly documented in the first two chapters), it becomes the key to Byzantine attitudes towards "innovation", the term used to categorize Iconoclasm by its opponents. The ultimate triumph of the iconophiles determined the supremacy of icons and "iconic" art in Byzantium. Cormack also suggests that the condemnation of innovation may lie at the root of later conservatism and resistance to change in Byzantine culture.

Given the skill with which these chapters are handled, it is a pity that the book should open with a dense reading of the *Life of St Theodore*, whose icons are completely unknown. The lack of surviving visual evidence and consequent emphasis on the literary text results in a weakness and artificiality in the first

chapter. In the other sections of the book the balance between image and text is carefully maintained: on St Demetrios, the spiritual patron of Thessaloniki (this is a particularly impressive chapter); on the Emperors Constantine IX and John II; and on the rural context of late twelfth-century cave paintings in Cyprus; Cormack employs a wide range of images and a variety of texts (hagiography, collections of miracles, theological tracts, monastic foundation charters as well as histories) with exemplary interdisciplinary care.

The claims he makes for a structuralist approach to Byzantine texts and artefacts are not entirely justified, but he scrupulously avoids the sort of judgmental history typified by Voltaire and certain modern historians, while revealing many intriguing aspects of Byzantine culture. The photographs provide ample and unusual illustration, though in a book deeply concerned with visual and written evidence, the relation between captions and the main text is unsatisfactory. The text also contains many repetitions and is not always clear.

But Cormack's insistence on studying the social context of the production and use of Byzantine icons is refreshing. The book is well produced, and should be read as a challenging introduction to the culture and mental outlook of certain predominantly ecclesiastical writers, artists and patrons of Byzantium.



# Pinning down the ephemera

## Sean French

GILBERT ADAIR  
Myths and Memories  
205pp. Collins. £10.95 (paperback, £3).  
0100 2177366

ROBERT HEWISON  
Too Much: Art and society in the Sixties  
1960-75  
350pp. Methuen. £14.95.  
0-413-01709 X

IAN CHAMBERS  
Popular Culture: The metropolitan experience  
244pp. Methuen. £13.95.  
0-413-76760 3

Gilbert Adair's dedication of *Myths and Memories* is coyly addressed "à la mémoire de R. B. et de G. P.". In his preface, though, he freely admits that the presiding geniuses of the book's two halves are Roland Barthes and Georges Perec. "Myths", the book's first section, consists of essays about subjects such as Agatha Christie, Charlie Chaplin, the Booker Prize, Page 3 girls, that is meant to provide an English counterpart to Barthes's *Mythologies*. The highly enjoyable second section, "Memories", consists of 400 numbered memories that are meant to do the same for Perec's *Je me souviens*.

Anyone who is tempted by Adair's sprightly analyses to read Barthes's original essays will find the tone there startlingly different. Barthes wrote them, he announced in his own preface, with the conviction that "by treating 'collective representations' as sign-systems,

## Aladdin sane?

### Charles Shaar Murray

PETER and LENI GILLMAN  
Atlas David Bowie: A biography  
511pp. Hodder and Stoughton.  
£16.95 (paperback, £10.95).  
0-340-40290 3

David Bowie is so firmly established as a dashing English gentleman about the arts that it seems almost incongruous that he began his career as the singer for one of the thousands of young, white blues bands which were formed in the early 1960s and whose members wanted nothing more than to follow in the footsteps of the Rolling Stones. Since then Bowie has brought about substantial changes in pop imagery, made androgyny acceptable in the pop music world, expanded the music's sonic and technological boundaries and become the only singer since the heyday of Frank Sinatra to pursue simultaneous and parallel careers as a serious actor and a bestselling musician. He considers himself, he says, to be "a generalist".

A biography of Bowie, then, should ideally chart the popular mythology of our time. Its subject has, after all, involved himself in issues which range from sexual politics to extra-terrestrial psychology. His political enthusiasms have included the right-wing occultism he briefly espoused in the mid-1970s as well as the anti-colonialism of his 1983 videos *Let's Dance* and *China Girl*. He has combined and re-combined almost every popular music genre, and has inspired, outraged and intrigued more fans than any other white popular musician with the exception of Bob Dylan.

Peter and Leni Gillman have produced the most thorough and competent biography of David Bowie so far. *Atlas David Bowie* explores three areas of his life and work which earlier biographers have avoided: his sexuality, his financial affairs and the long-term effects of his family history. They establish that the revelation of bisexuality which Bowie used so effectively to publicize the "Ziggy Stardust" re-launch in early 1972, came after a short period of active bisexuality—a brief fling lasting less than three years—was over for good. Bowie thus set a precedent in pop which made things far easier for later, more authentically gay bands like Boy George and Frankie Goes To Hollywood.

The Gillmans' investigative background (Peter Gillman was formerly Deputy Editor of the *Sunday Times* 'Insight' team) has un-

one might hope to go further than the pious show of unmasking them and account in detail for the mystification which transforms petit-bourgeois culture into a universal nature".

Adair covers much of the same subject matter but he is fundamentally too nice, too English, and too interested in popular culture for its own sake to emulate the detachment that gives *Mythologies* its authority. At the end of a perceptive piece, entitled "Seriously, Though", on the practice of using comedians for television charity appeals, he nervously assures us that he is not questioning the sincerity of Harry Secombe and Ken Dodd. He weakens a provocative argument about the place of paedophilia in our culture with the self-evident protest that "there is no question here of 'defending' paedophilia". Many of the essays simply read like reviews that have been delivered a couple of years late. Adair's strident assaults on Tom Stoppard, Martian poetry and Bernard Levin's *Enthusiasms* ("What is the use of avoiding linguistic clichés if everything one writes, everything one thinks, is a cliché") and his euphoric praise for the character of Dune Edna Everage may or may not be enjoyable, but they are quite inappropriate to a study of this kind.

At his best, though, Adair is illuminating. 'Throwaway observations that "slow motion [in films] tends to be a short cut to beauty", that while Keaton is a major figure in film, Chaplin belongs to history, seem pointed and true. Consequently the second section, which consists entirely of such throwaways, is both more entertaining and more suggestive. Each sentence or little paragraph begins "I remember"

doubtedly been useful in disentangling the financial dealings of Tony DeFries, Bowie's manager during the early years of his success. Operating under a contract which guaranteed him no less than 50 per cent of the performer's gross income, DeFries deducted the massive expenses of his promotional campaign and spendthrift managerial organization from Bowie's share. In order to detach himself from DeFries, Bowie was forced to agree to a settlement which commits his heirs to pay a considerable percentage of his earnings to DeFries's heirs—in perpetuity.

The authors place their greatest emphasis on Bowie's personal history. Their attention has been drawn to the number of institutionalized schizophrenics in his mother's family. These include Bowie's late half-brother—his senior by ten years and the star's first hero and role model. The Gillmans believe that much of the inspiration for Bowie's work originates in a fear of the possibility that he, too, would eventually fall victim to hereditary schizophrenia. Their theory is by no means implausible, but they exaggerate or diminish their findings in order to justify it and anything that cannot be made to fit the criteria is denigrated or dismissed. Any of Bowie's lyrics or performances which cannot be discussed in terms of homosexuality, conflict, drugs or mental illness are considered irrelevant or inferior. This critical method effectively reduces the work of the most influential pop musician of the 1970s to a set of symptoms, and further implies that the work of the "healthy" and "sane" Bowie of the 1980s is worthless.

In their introduction, the authors claim that the total ignorance of pop music with which they started the project is an advantage. In so far as it guarantees their independence from the network of loyalties and obligations which besets insiders, this may be so; but it also prevents them from understanding the uniqueness of Bowie's achievement. He is seldom discussed in the context of the pop environment, or properly assessed as a musician. Biographies written by rock music critics rarely, if ever, display the kind of journalistic professionalism which is Peter and Leni Gillman's stock-in-trade. It is almost impossible to imagine any pop journalist having the patience, expertise and tenacity necessary to locate and collate the kind of information presented in this book. It is, though, equally difficult for specialists in the purely investigative to capture and evoke the complex webs of cultural signifiers which Bowie has, throughout his career, manipulated so masterfully.

and there then follows some fact, event or celebrity, an assembly of objects united only because they have all stuck in Gilbert Adair's brain. To choose a few at random:

240. I remember my first pair of long trousers (a rather traumatic social promotion denied today's children, who appear to wear jeans from earliest infancy).  
241. I remember a glossy but short-lived magazine named *London Life*.  
242. I remember "I gotta horse!"

Some are autobiographical; some are memories we would all share. And some of them are wrong: he does not remember Lord Docker (he was Sir Bernard Docker); Dennis Lotis and Lita Roza were not Joe Loss's vocalists (they were Ted Heath's); Graham Greene did not appear uncredited in Truffaut's *La Nuit américaine* (he appeared under the pseudonym Henry Graham).

The items are charming and witty in isolation and cumulatively work with some power. If we think of the mind as a lyre, a mirror or lamp, we must also think of it as a junkyard, a collection of disparate, largely useless objects. This idea and the authenticity of the 400 little perceptions mean more than the earlier explicit attempts at cultural criticism.

Robert Hewison's *Too Much: Art and society in the Sixties* covers much of the same ground as Adair's "Memories" but the treatment could not be more different. Hewison has already chronicled the cultural life of Britain during the Second World War (in *Under Siege*) and of the Cold War (in *In Anger*). Here he covers a period through which he has lived as an adult. It is a subject that lends itself to the impressionistic, "New Journalism" style of, say, Tom Wolfe, Hunter S. Thompson or Nik Cohn; but Hewison remains unseduced and his style is studiously impersonal. His interpretations are relatively rare and modest in the extreme: "Each decade appears to have its own moment of myth... [they] reflect an imaginative rather than literal truth, but that does not destroy their validity"; "the experiments of the Theatre of Cruelty had opened up new means of expression, but at the expense of rational discourse". These are not judgments that will set readers at one another's throats. The final

## The disco floor of life

### Neil Berry

SIMON GARFIELD  
Expensive Habits: The dark side of the music industry  
269pp. Faber. £14.95 (paperback, £5.95).  
0-571-13720 2

DAYE HILL  
Designer Boys and Material Girls: Manufacturing the '80s Pop Dream  
160pp. Blandford. £9.95.  
0-7137-1857 9

How much did George Michael lose out on his recording deal with Innervision? Did Elton John really only get £15 a week while writing "Rocket Man"? Simon Garfield's book, *Expensive Habits*, a catalogue of cases of pop-star exploitation, is Dean Street conversation in print. For those—but perhaps only for those—who want to know exactly how, by whom and by how much the Beatles, the Kinks, the Who and others were ripped off, it is essential reading.

The book has a simple message: that now as ever the world of pop music is almost as rife with con-men as it is with gulls. Duplicious contracts are mindlessly signed by *ingénus* mesmerized by the idea of fame, or by established performers who have become too drugged and/or jaded to realize what the implications of their actions will be. Later, lawyers capitalize on their follies. Garfield's most telling case in this respect concerns the singer who replaced Jay Aston in the group Bucks Fizz. Aston's apparently ruthless treatment at the hands of colleagues and manager, and her resultant contractual problems, were widely publicized. Yet, when her replacement was asked about the terms of her contract, she replied that she had no idea what went on, really, but that if there were any difficulties she could always trust the others to help her.

chapter, where the first person comes out of the closet, is the weakest in the book. Hewison has approached his vast, chaotic subject with thoroughness and intelligence. The iconoclast he has largely left to others.

The 1960s are of course now celebrated or reviled as a Dionysiac age: of sexual liberation, of immense artistic and political ferment. For a period of happenings and revolution, Hewison has provided a history of bureaucracy. His heroes are not so much the creative artists, as the entrepreneurs who made the happenings happen. This is partly because many of the crucial events in the 1960s, from demonstrations in Grosvenor Square to parties at the Round House, prove elusive on the page. But it is also a shrewd observation of the age. The reason Arnold Wesker's scheme for spreading high culture to the masses failed was not because (or not just because) the idea was misguided but because he was not able to base his work in a building, and also because he alienated Jennie Lee, the minister for the arts.

Jim Haynes, for example, may often seem little more than a concupiscent hippy, but he managed to get shows on the road, parties into action and, most important of all, buildings to house them in. It was a time for organization, from Lord Goodman to Michael Horowitz. The impression remains, though, that while the 1960s did not lack for events, not much major work was produced by comparison with the previous couple of decades. The happenings have vanished and perhaps the real legacy is the LPs.

It seems appropriate that in *Popular Culture: The metropolitan experience*, a book designed as a textbook for students of communications, Iain Chambers provides not a bibliography but a list of "Further Materials" covering videos, LPs and television programmes. Chambers's book reads like a combination of the two previous books: thumbnail histories of every field of current culture from *Sergeant Pepper* to high-rise blocks. The snippets deployed are as familiar as the quotations from Benjamin and Barthes. Thus, *Popular Culture* may prove a useful textbook so long as it provides a route back into its sources rather than a handy detour around them.

*Expensive Habits* concludes (sloppily) with a chapter made up of quotations from pop stars and from pop operators. With dismal uniformity, they point to the conclusion that pop cynicism and corruption are practically inseparable. The last comment comes from Malcolm McLaren, chief architect of punk and the man behind the *Great Rock and Roll Swindle*. What people fail to realize, declares McLaren, is that pop is about making as much money as fast and as stylishly as possible. Garland with a hyperbolic blurb, Garfield's book is no doubt designed to make money, too. Written as it is, though, with crude, tabloid relish, it has no claim to style whatsoever.

The flagrant vulgarity and venality of so much of pop also fascinate Dave Hill. His *Designer Boys and Material Girls* is, however, more optimistic than Garfield's book. It is the sense that it suggests that some stars, the Scottish duo, the Eurythmics are an example of getting wise to the wiles of would-be exploiters and are learning how to manage themselves. Consisting of sixteen profiles from the *Face* magazine of (mostly British) post-punk bands and individual stars, Hill's book appears to anatomize the mid-1980s pop scene. As he sees it, it is full of contradictions, best epitomized by the Live Aid concert to raise money for the victims of drought in North Africa.

At once a display of human goodness and a piece of philanthropic condescension, a helping hand for the cruelly deprived and a brassy exhibition of self-terrible heroism, Live Aid has become a landmark in our own image: not the other way round, by the light of the Stars, we trip and stumble away through the shopping centres and into the disco floor of life.

British pop music journalism in general is just as bad—as by turns stupid, envious and vicious. Dave Hill at least tries hard. It is a pity that in passages like this—and there are many such in his book—he makes it so obvious

## Down the time track

### Colin Greenland

ROBERT LEESON  
Time Rope  
135pp. 0-582-25088 9

Three Against the World  
129pp. 0-582-25089 7

At War with Tomorrow  
153pp. 0-582-25090 0

The Metro Gangs Attack  
147pp. 0-582-25091 9

Loogman. £5.95 each.

"This is research of the utmost importance", says Arnold Medway of the *Time Annexe*. "The aim is simple, but far-reaching... Know who you were, understand who you are, decide what you will be." Arising from the discovery that individual memory is transmitted genetically, this is an admirable motto for the establishment where a volunteer subject, Kera Martell, is sent back down the "Time Track" to relive the lives of her ancestors. Prominently posted on page seven of Robert Leeson's *Time Rope* and frequently repeated through all four volumes of the tetralogy, it is also an exemplary text, a statement of intent, for an author who is using the notion of time travel to dramatize history and its political and moral lessons for young readers. That *Time Rope* makes such wretched reading is not due to any uncertainty of purpose.

Nor are the books deficient in drama. While

## After the Flood

### Alice H. G. Phillips

DICK KING-SMITH  
Noah's Brother  
Illustrated by Ian Newsham  
64pp. Gallancz. £5.95.  
0-375-03876 4

MARTIN WADDELL and GLENYS AMBRUS  
The Day It Rained Elephants  
2pp. Methuen. £4.95.  
0-446-54980 2

Noah's Brother explains why the Flood didn't wash evil out of the world. You see, there was only one good human being aboard the Ark—Noah's brother, Hazardikladoram, a 708-year-old vegetarian and animal lover—and he had no descendants. His mean, stupid, carnivorous nephews, sons of that awful fraud Noah, inherited the waterlogged earth. And you know how that story ends.

As Dick King-Smith retells it, Noah's brother, familiarly known as "Yessah" because he was so easily ordered around, cut down the trees for the Ark, filled it with animals, and quick-wittedly saved it from sinking. Noah, not wanting to share the credit, abandoned his brother at Journey's end and made sure his contributions went unrecorded—until now.

Believing parents may have their doubts about a version of Genesis 6-9 that omits God entirely, and they may not like the ramifications of the covenantal rainbow's eluding Noah and coming to rest on his brother. Marxist mothers and fathers will be pleased by the portrait of Mr and Mrs Noah as the original bourgeois exploiters. The majority of parents will smile at the biblical jokes and approve King-Smith's gentle revisionism.

Children, whether or not they know their Bible, will appreciate in *Noah's Brother* the eternal myth of wicked authority figures making life hard for an innocent child (in this case, for a childlike 708-year-old man). Wickedness triumphs generally here, as it does everywhere, but the specific innocent lives happily ever after. If this doesn't move the child reader, the disaster of the Flood and the fantasy of drifting in a boat above the highest mountain-top will.

Dick King-Smith and his illustrator, Ian Newsham, have a real feeling for the animals and an unforgotten tenderness for Yessah. Yessah may be an alter ego for King-Smith; the author, too, is a sort of Pied Piper of the animal world, leading them merrily through his books, including the prize-winning *The Sheep-Pig*. The scene in which the beasts feed and bath Yessah and put him to bed is a joy in words and

Kera sleeps in the Time Annexe in 2034, she is experiencing the life of her mother, Lady Fiona Horden, a runaway heiress in 1988, aged eighteen. Fiona herself dips back in time after swinging from a rope on the branch of a tree by a dreary canal; so, too, do two boys, the battered, bellicose Tod Morris and the clever, *déjà vu* Roller McKenzie, independently and apparently accidentally, to find themselves visiting the lives of their unknown forebears. Fee, Tod and Roller become the central characters of *Time Rope*. Each turns out to be the inheritor of a family tradition of honourable rebelliousness and bloody-mindedness which will, in the last volume, flare up triumphantly in their respective descendants in 2034. The historical episodes include Lady Margaret Horden defying her evil capitalist father and having an affair with a labourer; Rick Spencer the mistreated prentice robbing bloated plutocrats on the King's Highway; and Kofe the maroon fighting redcoats for freedom in Jamaica. Such chapters are titled simply "Fee", "Tod" and "Roller", to keep the incarnations clear.

Unfortunately, while Leeson is quite good at the various punch-ups and pursuits, fights with Franco's fascists or futuristic bikers, he is stunningly bad at dialogue. In the Neutral Zone, a wasteland realm where the trio have to wait before and after each time-trip, Fee pacifies the hostile Tod:

"Relax, Tod. Roller is right. Wherever we are, whenever we are, we are stuck with each other. As if

we were on a desert island. We cannot afford to quarrel."

Tod pulled a face. "OK. But what do we do?" Roller uncoiled his legs and stretched out full length in the grass.

"What can you do with time but let it pass?" This banal and contrived exchange of pronouncements is offered as conversation throughout every volume, every era; worst among the boffins of the Time Annexe. "Listen," Medway tells a colleague.

"you know what energy costs. It is to us what gold was to the 20th century. It's been like that ever since we lost the fossil fuel supplies in the North after the Civil War in '98."

This is the dialogue of mouthpieces, figures who function but have no feelings, no reactions. Involuntary victims of an unannounced and incomprehensible apocalypse that erases and rewrites their very selves, the youngsters hardly even shudder—because they had such sketchy selves in the first place.

With no atmosphere, scant background detail, and no continuum of substantive characterization to validate the encounters with historical paradigms, the organization of *Time Rope* falls apart. The fourth volume abruptly abandons the 1988 plot, leaving Fee, Tod and Roller in mid-conflict with the authorities, and substituting simplistic social upheaval in 2034. For all his proclaimed *Gnôthi seauton*, Leeson's is a manipulative, didactic fiction, with no time for subjectivity, the individual sensibility and the unprogrammable self.

No wonder the Noahs took to the Ark—they'd been reading another rainy-day book, *The Day It Rained Elephants*. The cliché "raining cats and dogs" is not exactly made new in this new picture book, but it is made colourful: the pachyderms which fall instead of raindrops from the suspiciously elephantine stormcloud are flowered, polka-dotted, wallpaper-patterned, psychedelic. Most amazingly, some of them are small enough to hide in a buttercup. Zoë and Jack, two children who live alone in a tin-roofed house, catch one of the elephants for their very own. The others evaporate when the sun comes out, thank heavens, but the illustrations are quickly amusing: an elephant, having crashed through a roof, in bed with pretty woman; a postman chasing an elephant riding away on his bicycle and later reappearing riding on the elephant's back; an elephant in a Boy Scout cookpot.

## A small battalion

### Nicole Irving

LYNNE REID BANKS  
Return of the Indian  
136pp. Dent. £7.95.  
0-460-06239 5

Lynne Reid Banks's popular *The Indian in the Cupboard* (1980) told the story of Omri and his friend Patrick whose magic cupboard brought to life any toy plastic figures they put in it. The boys soon found themselves embroiled in the lives of the miniature people they snatched out of the past: the Troquois Little Bull, his squaw Twin Stars, and Boone the cowboy. In this sequel the characters and the magic principles are revived, but changes have occurred in the boys' lives and there are enough surprises to refresh the original idea, in particular the boys' discovery that the magic properties they thought the cupboard held are in fact invested in the key. An old chest in Omri's room, one large enough for the boys to climb into, becomes a time-and-place machine.

In the earlier book, Patrick and Omri found that bringing their miniature friends to life led to all kinds of difficulties and dangers, and they wisely brought their experiments to a halt. In the intervening year, Omri has drawn on these adventures to write a story for a competition.

When he learns he has won a prize, he is tempted to check that all the fantastic events really did happen. But the moment he brings Little Bull to life, his hopes of simply satisfying his curiosity vanish: "his" Indian has just been

wounded in battle and now lies there helpless, dying perhaps. To leave him thus would be to shrug off all responsibility. Omri and Patrick conjure up medical assistance; then they call on the services of a toy soldier, Royal Marine Corporal Fickits, to train Indians in the use of modern weapons. With this help, Little Bull is sent back to save his people. The central adventure makes enthralling and hair-raising reading. Keeping all these goings-on secret from Omri's family is a feat and there are practical problems such as how to feed forty tiny Iroquois braves and their horses in an attic bedroom.

One aspect of the novel is handled less successfully. In the opening pages, we learn that Omri's family have moved to a large house in a rough area. The boy has to contend with a group of bullying skinheads on his way home from school. Omri's opportunity to get his own back comes when the skinheads burglar his family's house: he and Patrick are alone and make use of Fickits, their loyal and efficient Royal Marine, to attack the skinheads with a miniature army. All this is fair enough. What is questionable is the portrayal of the skinheads. We accept that the corporal or the hospital matron should be comic stock characters. But there is a strong identification (and it must be said, a complementarily negative one) between the working-class area and the aggressive, thieving louts. The only point of contact between our nice little heroes and these young thugs is fighting and the balance is tipped in favour of the better-off children to whom this book perhaps unwittingly addresses itself.

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The first of the Columbia University Book Arts Press Occasional Publications prints an expanded version of a lecture by B. H. Breslau on *The Uses of Bookbinding Literature* (44pp. New York: Columbia University School of Library Service, 516 Butler Library, New York NY 10027. \$10). Breslau provides a compact and authoritative guide to his subject as it has developed since the seventeenth century.